

**GCSE (9-1)**

**Religious Studies**

**J625**

**OCR Report to Centres June 2018**

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- areas where students were more successful
- main areas where students may need additional support and some reflection
- points of advice for future examinations

It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

The report also includes links and brief information on:

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- Link to **grade boundaries**
- **Further support that you can expect from OCR**, such as our Active Results service and CPD programme

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## **J625/01 Christianity: Beliefs and Teachings & Practices**

### **General Comments:**

The first paper of a new specification always brings fresh challenges to centres, candidates and examiners. Overall it is fair to say that candidates rose to the challenges and in some cases exhibited quite outstanding knowledge and understanding of Christian beliefs and teachings and practices. Well-developed evaluative and analytical skills were also clearly evident. The new demands of the specification coming from the new DfE GCSE subject content in 2015, which require candidates to refer to common and divergent views within Christianity and to underpin their responses with examples of Sources of Wisdom and Authority, were often well met. A broad view was taken by examiners of the meaning of Sources of Wisdom and Authority to include scripture, tradition, statements by churches, lives and examples and teachings of key figures in the religion and significant events in the history of the religion. It was pleasing to see how well candidates could show the way in which beliefs teaching and practices have their roots in these sources. Similarly, the majority of responses provided examples of different views of Christian groups about the topics under discussion in the evaluative question, part e).

The nature of the specification requires some quite specific questions to be asked but as always, examiners applied the principle of positive marking wherever possible and used the levels of response to give credit to a very wide range of appropriate responses, many of which did not feature in the mark scheme, which is an indicative document rather than a proscriptive one.

Examiners noted that time management was a problem for some candidates who spent too long on the 3 mark questions and found they did not have the time to complete the final part of Question 2. Responses to the 3 mark questions were sometimes 10 or 12 lines long with some of the features of an essay. These parts of the question are marked by points and appropriate responses can consist of three concise sentences.

Part d) of both questions proved challenging for many candidates, particularly 2d). Candidates need to read the wording of the question carefully to ensure their response meets the demands of the question. Part d) is assessed for both AO1 and AO2 but candidates need only concern themselves with responding to the question and giving as full and as thoroughly developed a response as possible. Good responses to these parts will offer sound knowledge and deep understanding and some analysis of the topic of the question as well.

In part e), evaluation and analysis (AO2) accounts for 12 of the 15 marks. There were many examples of well thought out and structured discussions, referring to the views of more than one Christian group. The majority of candidates underpinned their discussion with sound knowledge and understanding and referred to some kind of appropriate source(s) of wisdom or authority. This enabled examiners to award 2 or more marks for AO1. Some candidates offered a personal viewpoint which is no longer a requirement of the evaluative question. The best responses demonstrated considered judgements based on some evidence and made comment throughout the discussion as well as offering a short balanced conclusion.

## Comments on Individual Questions:

### Question No.1

a)

This proved to be a very accessible question and most candidates offered at least two if not three appropriate responses. Some referred to church activities such as: Sunday school; youth groups; family services; messy church; and marriage counselling. Other responses included baptism, marriage and funeral services and the support that goes along with these activities. Responses only needed to be in the form of three short statements. Some responses were extensive and explanatory. These responses often gained full marks but the extended writing undoubtedly had a negative effect on the time management of these candidates.

b)

Appropriate responses referred to the idea of Jesus as the person to whom Christians owe allegiance, who is the role model and guide for their lives. Some responses however just exchanged the word Lord for another of the titles which are applied to Jesus, such as King or Messiah.

c)

In order to limit the amount of information candidates might offer in a 3 mark question, only one reason was required on this occasion. Hence one meaning of sacrament stated and developed with an example could gain the full marks. Responses which offered more than one reason could only be given credit for the first reason, in line with the rules for the marking of short answer questions.

d)

The majority of responses demonstrated understanding of what a pilgrimage is and offered some knowledge of why a pilgrimage might benefit a Christian spiritually. Many responses did not link this information specifically to Jerusalem. Of the responses which did refer to Jerusalem, knowledge of why Jerusalem is an important place of pilgrimage for Christians was sometimes scant. Many candidates linked Jerusalem generally to the 'footsteps' of Jesus rather than to specific places within Jerusalem. Better responses gave detailed explanations of why particular sites in Jerusalem would have spiritual significance and analysed more carefully the benefit for the believer, with direct reference for example, to Holy Week and the death and resurrection of Jesus. A small number of responses confused pilgrimage to Jerusalem with Mecca or another site of Christian pilgrimage such as Lourdes.

e)

The stimulus was intended to give candidates the opportunity to discuss whether Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, containing the Christian ideal, is too hard to accept, put into practice or obey (follow). Some candidates took the stimulus to be referring to the Sermon being too difficult to follow in the sense that it is hard to read and understand. This approach was creditable but candidates taking this approach tended to limit their responses because it was difficult to develop a discussion with reference to different Christian groups. Candidates, who focused on the teaching in the Sermon, drew upon aspects such as the reference to peacemakers in the Beatitudes or the teaching about divorce or the instruction to turn other cheek to show how difficult these teachings are to put into practice. Many responses pointed to Jesus' words about the 'narrow gate' as evidence of Jesus acknowledgement of the difficulty of following his teachings. Candidates also referred to how different Christian groups place different emphases on the teachings leading to differing views about how hard the teaching is to follow.

Many responses considered the issue of pacifism and how different denominations viewed the teaching about turning the other cheek. Candidates who did not respond to this question lost marks not only for the question but also for SPaG.

Question No.2

a)

Responses to this part were generally accurate and sufficiently developed to achieve the 3 marks available. Some responses incorrectly focused on Christmas and the birth of Jesus, including a description of the gifts. A few responses referred to Lent rather than Advent while some just referred to it as the lead up to Christmas without further detail.

b)

A very high proportion of candidates achieved full marks for this part, exhibiting good knowledge of the role of the serpent. Examiners reported that a few responses lacked the appropriate focus and offered information about the roles of Adam and Eve without reference to the serpent.

c)

While most responses correctly translated the word 'omniscient' as 'all knowing', many did not develop this to achieve the 3 marks. Better responses referred to the view that God's omniscience means he knows all that people do and have done and is crucial to his role as Judge. Some responses used material from Part 2 of the qualification to develop their response, suggesting God's omniscience is problematic as his knowledge of the future can be seen to imply a lack of free will for humans.

d)

Examiners reported that this question proved to be a significant challenge for many candidates. Some responses missed issue of 'need' referring only to how, according to Christians, salvation might be accomplished. Those responses that did focus on the 'need', pointed to the idea of original sin, sometimes referring back to part b), and also to the tendency of humans to sin during their lives both of which create the need for salvation.

e)

The stimulus provoked good discussions, most of which examined the role of prayer in a church service as compared to other activities. Examiners reported that a few candidates lost marks at AO1 as they did not provide clear evidence of Sources of Wisdom and Authority but most referred for example, to church practice, liturgy or the Lord's Prayer. Many responses offered knowledge and understanding of different aspects of worship and of how those linked to different Christian groups. For example, the significance of the celebration of the Eucharist in a service for some Christians or of charismatic worship for others, with prayer being important but not the most important part of the service for all Christians. Some responses focused on a description of different elements of a church service rather than providing a discussion evaluating the issue in the stimulus. Examiners reported that some responses lost the focus on the church service and discussed the value of corporate prayer as opposed to personal prayer. Some credit could be given to these responses.

Examiners reported, as was mentioned in the General Comments above, that some candidates ran out of time and did not complete their answer to this part of the question. Otherwise good responses ended abruptly without conclusion.

## J625/02 Islam: Beliefs and Teachings & Practices

### General Comments:

Despite this being the first examination of the new specification, it was reassuring to see that many candidates coped well with the paper. While there were some candidates who appeared to have little knowledge of some of the topics, the responses overall suggested that candidates had been taught competently and the specification well covered by most Centres. It was also evident in some Centres that the specification topics had not only been covered adequately but explored and developed to allow candidates to have a wide and expansive knowledge and understanding of the subject and to develop the ability to analyse and evaluate as appropriate, which of course is very important in the (d) and (e) questions.

The (d) and (e) questions did prove challenging for some candidates as they were unable to either refer to sources of authority and/or use different Muslim groups for comparison or contrast. This skill will undoubtedly develop over the next few years as teachers and candidates become more familiar with and more confident in these areas. That said, many candidates did answer (e) questions with confidence, exploring the varied viewpoints.

Most candidates used the time well and there was little evidence of candidates failing to complete the paper.

### Comments on Individual Questions:

#### Q.1(a)

This question was generally answered well with many candidates achieving three marks. Many used the Arabic word for the Pillar as well as or instead of the English equivalent. A few candidates confused the Pillars with the Articles of Faith.

#### Q.1(b)

Most candidates knew what Khums was although there was a little confusion over the amount involved, with some candidates stating either 2.5% or 25% rather than the correct 20%. Some other candidates confused it with Zakat. Many candidates knew it was annual and some were able to state that it could be taken as a tax in some Muslim countries. Candidates who achieved fewer marks tended to state what Khums was or why it was paid as opposed to how it was paid as the question asked.

#### Q.1(c)

Most candidates understood the term Sadaqah and many achieved two or three marks. Candidates who did not achieve three marks tended to either describe what Sadaqah is rather than why it is given or concentrated on it being a charitable act only and did not consider the personal/spiritual benefits for the person who is giving it.

#### Q.1(d)

In the vast majority of cases, candidates knew who Ibrahim was and that he was a prophet of Allah. Most candidates recounted the story of the sacrifice of Isma'il and a significant number also referred to monotheism, Kaaba and Ibrahim's links to Hajj. A small but significant number of candidates were confused over Ibrahim's chronology, stating he followed Muhammad (pbuh)



and/or contributed to the Qur'an. A small number of candidates confused Ibrahim with the Prophet Muhammad or the Angel Jibril.

Q.1(e)

This question was accessible to all candidates with only a few focusing on one side of the discussion only. Most candidates identified the importance of the Shahadah or Tawhid and the sin of shirk in contrast with the need to help others. A number of candidates discussed the dilemma of helping others (usually citing Zakah) without belief, which would still result in hell fire in the next life thus excluding those who were not Muslim from al-Jannah. Some candidates were able to consider differences within the faith about belief and helping others, looking to Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims for examples. A minority of candidates did not mention Islam but tended to write a very generic answer about religious belief in general and helping others. A very few looked to Christianity for examples of helping others. While some candidates did refer to the Qur'an as a source of authority, the references were vague with few able to quote the Surah. The majority of candidates were able to achieve two or three marks for AO1 but fewer were able to achieve the higher marks for AO2. However, as teachers and candidates become more familiar with the new Levels of Response, this may not be the case in future examinations.

Q.2(a)

This question was generally well answered with many candidates giving two or three correct answers. Virtually all candidates could identify the Qur'an as a revealed holy book. The most common incorrect answers were the Bible, the Hadith and the Sunna suggesting perhaps that they either did not notice or understand the word 'revealed' in the question.

Q.2(b)

Most candidates made a good attempt at this question and many achieved two or three marks. There were some very good explanations demonstrating good teaching and clear understanding. Many candidates understood the basic differences between Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims and the implications of them. Some candidates confused al-Qad'r with Al-Adl.

Q.2(c)

This question was the one that most candidates struggled with on this paper and a significant number of candidates did not appear to be familiar with the term. Some candidates missed it out or wrote a very generic answer, which did not show any genuine understanding of the topic. However, those candidates who did know the meaning of niyyah answered it well and were able to give clear explanations of why it is important to Muslims to have the right intention to worship with a pure heart.

Q.2(d)

While this was a difficult question for some candidates, others were able to respond appropriately. Candidates who achieved higher Levels of Response were able to discuss the belief that Allah is just and that he will judge Muslims fairly and justly (as one of his 99 names states). Because of this and the fact that Allah is merciful and benevolent, Muslims believe that when he judges people it will be the right and appropriate judgement. Some candidates referred to Usul ad-Din in the Shi'a tradition but perhaps not as many as expected.

Several scripts suggested that candidates were not sure what the question was asking of them and concentrated on judgement instead of Divine Justice; these candidates tended to discuss al-Jannah and Jahannam or the angels who take notes throughout a person's life. Consequently, their analyses and evaluations were limited. A significant number of candidates were able to identify the links between Sunni and Shi'ite beliefs in free will and judgement. Some lower ability

candidates confused Divine Justice with responses to crime. Others thought the question was about Shari'ah Law and the severity of punishments. Many candidates were credited good marks for AO1 and AO2 although very few candidates achieved full marks.

**Q.2(e)**

Candidates appeared to respond well to this question and many were able to demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of Ramadan and Id-ul-Fitr, although it did appear that Id-ul-Fitr had not been covered so well in some centres as Ramadan. Unfortunately, not a few candidates confused Id-ul-Fitr with Id-ul-Adha and could not be credited the higher marks. The main focus for many candidates was the fact that Sawm is one of the Five Pillars of Islam there therefore must be more important than a festival. Many candidates understood the importance of fasting and why it could be seen to be more important than the celebration of the cessation of fasting. More successful candidates looked at the religious, spiritual and practical issues connected with observing both Eid-ul-Fitr and Ramadan and how each affected the individual and the community. In many cases there was not much evidence of sources of authority or of variations within different Muslim groups.

## **J625/03 Judaism: Beliefs and Teachings & Practices**

### **General Comments:**

Centres deserve great credit for their commitment and professionalism in preparing candidates for the first examination under this new specification. 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 in this new format. Rubric errors were obviously very rare as there were no optional questions. Candidates are required to answer all the questions on the paper. Occasionally candidates failed to attempt certain questions, though there was no particular pattern as to which. Examiners endeavoured to mark crossed out responses where no alternative was provided. It is important to stress that a failure to answer question 1e resulted in no mark for SPAG. Most candidates answered questions on unstructured answer booklets and very few failed to complete their responses within its pages. A very small number of candidates required additional sheets.

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 and these were generally apparent. 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 up to two marks were awarded accordingly. Part e questions primarily deal with analysis and evaluation. Up to three marks were awarded for knowledge and understanding and these were often apparent. It is important for candidates to make clear reference to sources of wisdom and authority if they are to exceed one mark. In order to exceed a 'weak' response, candidates needed to address convergent and divergent viewpoints. Candidates are no longer required to overtly present their own opinion.

Obviously, time spent on questions should be dictated by the number of marks available. Some candidates spent too long on the three mark questions and insufficient time on parts d and e. It is crucial that candidates devote adequate time and effort to part e responses. In the past, the space available on the paper was indicative of how much a candidate should write but this is no longer the case. Time-consuming and complicated and essay planning is rarely of benefit although a few brief notes and some acronyms can be of great help. Some candidates' handwriting can be a challenge to decipher. Very few concerns were reported with spelling, punctuation or grammar. Candidates are not expected to achieve absolute perfection in these aspects due to the pressure of the context. Candidates are not penalised for misspelling words transliterated from the Hebrew. Far more than in previous years, there was some confusion between Judaism and other faiths, especially Christianity and, to a lesser extent, Islam. Many candidates display slightly simplistic and stereotypical understandings of some 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.

### Comments on Individual Questions:

1a – Candidates were usually able to present some of the key beliefs about G-d as creator. Examiners were generally flexible as to what constituted a single belief. Candidates were aware of what He created and how long it took and where it is recorded and what the creation says about His nature.

1b – Candidates were far less certain as to what constituted a 'ritual mitzvot'. As such, many of the suggestions were actually ethical in nature. Even though examiners were once again flexible in their interpretation of the question, many failed to achieve full marks. Candidates were credited for a wide range of non-ethical responses.

1c – Similarly, there was some confusion over the content of the Shema. Many responses were based on the misapprehension that the Shema is synonymous with the Torah. Better responses identified teachings about adherence to the mitzvot, monotheism and how the passages impact on the wearing of ritual dress and the mezuzah.

1d – More able candidates demonstrated an impressive knowledge and understanding of Sukkot. They were usually aware of the origins of the festival and many recognised the agricultural significance of the celebrations. An awareness of the sukkah was far more prevalent than of the four species. The latter was somewhat conspicuous by its absence but some were familiar with the concept of a 'pilgrim festival'. Candidates were often able to analyse the impact that the festival has on the Jewish community and on a family's relationship with G-d. The main concern was a tendency to confuse Sukkot with other Jewish festivals, especially Passover and Shabbat, both in terms of traditions and meaning.

1e – The stimulus about the impact of the covenant seemed to encourage some detailed and informed responses. The majority were able to make clear reference to convergent and divergent viewpoints, often making use of the Orthodox and Progressive positions. In addition, candidates were usually able to make clear use of sources of wisdom and authority in their answer. One of the main pitfalls was the tendency to simplify and misrepresent the different Jewish denominations and to focus too heavily on the tradition of circumcision within Judaism, to the exclusion of other rituals and mitzvot. Other candidates concentrated on the original covenant stories but failed to discuss their impact on Judaism today. The strongest responses demonstrated clear knowledge and understanding of the covenant, as well as the ability to analyse and evaluate different arguments, without losing sight of the stimulus in the process.

2a – This was one of the better answered questions. Many candidates were able to achieve three marks. Common responses included the ark, the Torah scroll, the bimah, the ner tamid and so on. Ritual dress and the rabbi were not credited, though the Star of David and the yad were. Candidates also received marks for reference to the mikveh and separate seating areas. There was occasional confusion with features found in the church or the mosque.

2b – The main rituals associated with Pesach were also regularly identified. Unsurprisingly the Seder meal was the main focus for many. Often the marks were achieved with a description of the symbolic foods to be found on the plate. Other candidates related these to the original story, though that alone did not achieve marks as the question specified a tradition. Marks were awarded for reference to chametz and the matzah, including traditions on the eve of Passover. General responses such as 'pray' or 'read the Torah' were not credited.

2c – It was very apparent that candidates had been well taught about Pikuach Nefesh as the concept appeared with great regularity. Where it was used as exemplification or development,

this was beneficial. Where it had been used instead of a definition of 'Sanctity of Life', this was not the case. A definition was needed and those that referred to the concept as implying that human life is sacred or holy were rewarded. Many answers correctly linked 'Sanctity of Life' to the creation story in Genesis.

2d – Candidates employed a range of different approaches when tackling the question about The Promised Land. Many rooted their answers in the covenants with Abraham and Moses. They explored G-d's promise to Abraham and the journey through the desert after the Exodus from Egypt. There was a significant focus on the role of the Messiah and the Messianic Age, sometimes at the expense of any acknowledgement that, for many Jews, the state of Israel is The Promised Land and is important to them for many reasons. Candidates often discussed its importance as a guarantee of safety and security, whilst others discussed its role in helping Jews live a Jewish lifestyle and maintain a Jewish identity.

2e - The majority were able to make clear reference to convergent and divergent viewpoints about the importance of marriage, often making some use of the Orthodox and Progressive positions. This was not always done well and revealed some confusion over the respective positions. Some candidates confused the Jewish position with the celibacy advocated by the Catholic Church. Candidates were usually able to make clear use of the relevant sources of wisdom and authority in their answer. They usually focussed on the command to 'be fruitful and multiply' and the man and woman becoming 'one flesh'. The better responses made effective reference to the marriage ceremony and the most significant rituals, linking these back to the question. Some effectively introduced discussions about same-sex marriage and related these to the stimulus.

## J625/04 Buddhism: Beliefs and Teachings & Practices

### General Comments:

Entry to this paper was good. Overall the standard was lower than in previous years, as is to be expected with a new and untried specification. Some candidates seem to have only a very basic knowledge of Buddhism and made assumptions, such as that the Buddha is a 'god' in Buddhism or comparable with Christ in Christianity. The idea of anatta continues to cause confusion with candidates stating that Buddhists do not believe in a 'soul' (which is not a good translation as 'unchanging self' shows a much better understanding of the actual Buddhist teaching while 'soul' has associations with Christianity that can easily lead to misunderstanding) and then immediately going on to say that the 'soul' is 'reborn'. Having said this, some papers were very impressive indeed, demonstrating knowledge and understanding that would not be out of place at A level.

There are no optional questions in this paper making rubric errors virtually extinct, although some candidates left questions blank if they did not feel able to answer. This was, however, rare. Most candidates appear to have comfortably completed the paper in the time allowed with very little evidence that the final question was rushed or left unfinished. There appear to be some areas of the specification that are causing problems to some candidates. There was a widespread lack of understanding about Uposatha days, for example and also about the forms of suffering, which appear as a clear and distinct part of the specification.

It is vital that teachers and candidates understand the importance of referring to sources of wisdom and authority and to different traditions and understandings within Buddhism, particularly in part e questions as responses that display no evidence at all of these are limited to level 1. Most candidates managed to make some mention and many responses gained at least level 2, but this does need to be clear in order to access the top levels. Sources of wisdom and authority are not limited to scripture, but can also be references to the Buddha; specific teachings (such as the Four Noble Truths or the Noble Eightfold Path); modern teachers such as the Dalai Lama, or scholars of Buddhism. As with any religious tradition, different views may be individual, based on personal understanding; cultural, based on local ideas or beliefs; based in particular traditions such as Theravada, Mahayana, Tibetan, Pure Land, etc. or on life style such as lay or monastic. All of these are acceptable but should be clearly sign posted in responses.

Some candidates were clearly using a formula in part e questions: 'Some Buddhists would say, others Buddhists would say, Siddhartha would say, and atheist would say.' This was not a successful tactic and did not generally lead to high marks because the 'some/other' approach did not often clearly delineate different points of view within Buddhism or give reasons/evidence to support them. References to the Buddha tended to be speculative and not based on sources of authority. Often this tended to reflect the views of the candidate that were not firmly rooted in Buddhism. Atheist views were not relevant to the questions that were asked. Top level responses require analysis and evaluation including the ability to compare different views and comment on their value, rather than just stating what the different arguments are. While there is no need for the candidate to offer a personal opinion, there is a need for a clear conclusion offering some form of judgement on the question from a Buddhist perspective. Responses to part e questions tended to be shorter than in the legacy specification, which is disappointing.

### Comments on Individual Questions:

#### Question No. 1

Q1(a) Almost all candidates gained all of the marks for this question. A few gave responses in English (which was acceptable). Some gave responses in a combination of English and Pali, which was also creditable. A few gave 'dharma' instead of 'dukkha'. A tiny minority confused the Three Marks of Existence with the Three Jewels, often making the same mistake in Q2(a) and thus getting the marks for neither. Some more able candidates gave far more information than was required, explaining each of the Three Marks of Existence in some detail where only naming them was required. This is not a good use of the available time.

Q1(b) This was the least well answered question on the paper with the majority of candidates talking about tanha/craving and explaining that this is one of the Three Marks of Existence and the Four Noble Truths. Tanha is a cause of suffering in Buddhist thought but the three forms of suffering are clearly delineated in the specification and it is this that the question was targeting. Again, Pali or English responses were fine and the exact wording was not required. The responses that were creditable were *dukkha dukkha* (physical or mental suffering or suffering of suffering); *viparinama dukkha*, suffering of change caused by impermanence and *sankhara dukkha*, all pervasive suffering that underlies the nature of existence. Candidates were not required to use the technical terms, but were required to be able to explain one of these. The few candidates that did gain full marks generally named *dukkha dukkha*, explained that this could relate to physical suffering and gave the example of a broken leg. Candidates who gave an example of physical suffering in an explanation of tanha gained one mark. The question asked about one type of suffering so candidates who moved on to a second one gained no further credit.

Q1(c) There were a minority of candidates that clearly did not know what kamma/karma is and were guessing, usually assuming that it was related to suffering. This is worrying, given that karma is a foundational concept in dharmic religion. The majority of candidates, however, did not have any difficulty and gained either two or three marks depending on the amount of detail they included in their response. Many used the phrase 'what goes around comes around' which does not, in itself, explain the nature of karma as it is understood in Buddhism and was not credited.

Q1(d) Most candidates gained 4-5 marks on this question. A few limited their AO1 mark because despite showing perfectly adequate understanding of the significance of the Four Sights, they did not clearly demonstrate that they knew what they were. The best responses explained that the Four Sights were what opened the Buddha's eyes to the existence of suffering in the world, and to the possibility of finding a way of overcoming it. Knowledge was generally good, with many relating the story of the Four Sights and explaining that this was the catalyst that ultimately led to the formation of Buddhism. Some debated whether the story is historical or mythological, but this rarely added anything to the response.

Q1(e) This was the better answered of the part e questions. Most were able to offer a suggestion that other things might be more important. Suggestions included the Noble Eightfold Path, as this provides a practical way in which to overcome craving and to reach enlightenment. Many better responses contrasted the importance of overcoming craving, often through a monastic lifestyle, in the Theravada tradition, with the importance of compassion and the Bodhisattva path in Mahayana Buddhism. The strongest responses tended to explain that tanha and the need to overcome it underlies all Buddhist teaching and so is foundational in a way that other teachings might not be. Some suggested Pure Land Buddhism as a different understanding in which faith

in Amitabha Buddha and the practice of chanting become more important than anything else in this world. Some candidates tended to give a very basic answer often just agreeing with the statement and demonstrating very little knowledge or understanding of Buddhism.

Question No. 2

Q2(a) Most candidates gained full marks for this question with no difficulty. A very small minority clearly were guessing and named jewels (sapphire, ruby etc.). Conversely, some gave far more detail than was required, associating the jewels with colours and explaining them in detail. A small number of candidates once again confused 'dharma' with 'dukkha' or confused the Three Jewels with the Three Marks of Existence.

Q2(b) Generic responses on the benefits of pilgrimage were usually credited except where they were clearly linked to a wrong understanding of Bodh Gaya (for example stating that it was the birth place of the Buddha). Responses did tend to be generic rather than centred on the significance of Bodh Gaya, although some showed a good understanding of the significance of this site. Responses that were very generic and did not relate to the specific benefits of pilgrimage (such as meditation, with no further development) were not credited.

Q2(c) Candidates did not have to name different forms of meditation, although the majority did so. Accurate descriptions were credited. Having said this, descriptions had to be of forms of meditation that could be clearly identified and differentiated. Generic responses referring to practices such as chanting or mudras were not credited, as, while these may be used during meditation, they do not constitute specific forms of meditation. Walking meditation and visualisation meditation were credited as these are clearly distinguishable and can be attributed to particular Buddhist traditions. The most common responses were vipassana, samatha, zap-zen and meta bhavana. 'Zen' was a common response, and was not credited since on its own it is not a reference to a form of meditation, but to a Buddhist tradition. The majority of candidates gained all three marks.

Q2(d) On the whole, candidates did not appear to be particularly confident on the topic of Uposatha days. Many gained some marks, particularly in AO2, for quite general responses that could apply to most festivals. There were a few extremely good responses but most candidates gained 3-4 marks, mostly for AO2.

Q2(e) This was not particularly well answered. It was difficult for a response to gain level 2 or above for AO1 without making specific reference to one or more funeral or death rituals and a surprising number of responses did not do so. Candidates did not seem well informed on this area of the specification, and many merely commented that death rituals are not important since beliefs about rebirth mean that death is not 'real' or important. This does not demonstrate good understanding. Some argued that some Buddhists believe merit can be transferred to the dead, but there was a lack of detailed understanding. A small but worrying minority displayed very little understanding indeed, unable to go beyond a simple statement that such rituals are important or suggesting that they are less important than similarly randomly selected Buddhist practices that they were aware of. Some wrote about afterlife beliefs rather than ritual practices. There were a small number of excellent responses, most of which concluded, through an examination of various traditions including Tibetan sky burial, the Obon festival and Theravadin traditions that death rituals are important. Some were aware that death rituals may be culturally determined and suggested that it is the beliefs rather than the practices that are universally important.



## **J625/05 Hinduism: Beliefs and Teachings & Practices**

### **General Comments:**

This was the first paper assessing a new specification, and examiners felt that it was a fair starting point, with accessible questions offering an appropriate level of challenge to candidates. In practice however, there were some questions candidates found more challenging than expected.

All questions and sections of questions were compulsory and almost all candidates at least attempted the entire paper. 1b and 2c were the sections most commonly left unattempted and they also gave rise to the most confusion as to what had been asked for/about. Very few wholly blank scripts were observed. There was an increase, when compared to the legacy specification, of candidates attempting question sections out of the order in which they are written on the paper. This had no clear impact on the content or quality of the responses, but it worth noting that many candidates taking such an approach mis-numbered the sections.

In the main candidates seemed to be well prepared in terms of examination skills; in marked contrast to the legacy specification there were very few extended answers offered as responses for the short answer a), b) and c) parts and most candidates were aware that more than a few lines would be required to deal adequately with the e) parts. That being said, there was evidence of candidates not taking sufficient time to read questions carefully, taking note of the command words and key phrases.

Responses to e) part questions appeared, for the most part, to have been constructed around formulae intended to ensure the presentation of multiple view points and the sources / justifications for them. While most candidates have absorbed the formula a large number did not appear to grasp the kind of material which would constitute reasoned or justified argument and fell back on generalities such as 'because this is what Hindus believe' or on repetition of the descriptive point they are attempting to justify. While candidates have been successfully encouraged to include a range of views on an issue these are generally presented only as additional knowledge. With the new level descriptors explicitly limiting the marks available for pure knowledge to 3 out of 15, and the AO2 descriptors expressly requiring developed discussion and analysis for the higher levels simply adding more views does not automatically equate to higher marks. Such responses often take the form of blocks of knowledge which are discursive only in that they describe different perspectives on the stimulus, Candidates using this approach therefore struggled to demonstrate the 'comment on' and/or 'comparison of' elements required for the higher AO2 marks.

### **Comments on Individual Questions:**

#### **Question 1a**

This question provides a good example of a failure to read the question in its entirety. The overwhelming majority of candidates lost marks here by focussing only on the final word - 'Tri-Murti' and simply naming the deities. Creditable responses needed to show recognition that the questions asks about the names of places, not deities.

#### Question 1b

Examiners were surprised at how poorly this question was answered with many candidates seeming wholly unfamiliar with the term 'darshan'. Some explicitly confused it with dharma, others with puja and some simply wrote general comments about Hindus having many gods or seeking liberation. This was generally an extremely poorly answered question and it was often left wholly unattempted.

#### Question 1c

This question was well answered, with most candidates being able to include among their three examples Hindu specific concepts such as ahimsa or dana.

#### Question 1d

Most candidates had the knowledge required to answer this question well, recognising the key terms of karma and samsara and being able to accurately state what they meant. Some candidates struggled to connect these two pieces of knowledge in the way required by the question but there were a range of different successful approaches. Some candidates outlined different types of karma and the ways they operate within samsara, others linked karma with dharma and/or with yoga to explain how Hindus might seek to influence their future in samsara and a few took a more philosophical approach beginning with samsara and considering how liberation from it might be achieved.

Although most candidates wrote some variation on the idea of good karma ultimately resulting in liberation it was pleasing to see that there were some with a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between karma and maya, liberation as freedom from karma and/or the role of grace.

#### Question 1e

Most responses to this evaluation question were, as anticipated, focussed on the margas/yogas as different paths to liberation, with most candidates concluding that the stimulus must be wrong as these multiple paths exist. Candidates in the main had a good level of knowledge about moksha as a goal to strive for and the different ways in which this might be done. There was less confidence in this as a discursive topic, but many candidates offered thoughtful and creative responses, for example arguing that there was only one path which would be right for a given person and that this was distinct from there being one universally acknowledged path.

#### Question 2a

This question was generally answered well, with most candidates having a mix of creditable generic answers (like pilgrimage) and Hindu specific answers (like havan). Where candidates lost marks here was by giving specific examples (such as worshipping Ganesh) rather than identifying types.

#### Question 2b

Where candidates recognised that they had been asked about a festival they answered well, with most being able to gain at least one point for referencing murtis of Ganesh and a majority being able to describe the specific creation of temporary murti for this festival including details

about procession through the streets and immersion water. However, a large minority of candidates did not recognise that they had been asked about an event and wrote instead about myths associated with Ganesh; most commonly about how he got his elephants head.

#### Question 2c

Where candidates recognised the two concepts they almost always gained all three marks. Some did so by giving correct meanings for both prakriti and purusha and then adding a third point about the two together being responsible for creation/change; others wrote a more integrated account of how the material world comes into being. Candidates who gained only one or two marks usually did so because they only addressed one of the terms, describing it rather than considering the relationship.

However, a large number of candidates, possibly a majority across the entry, did not recognise either term. Many left this question untried. Others wrote, as with 1b, about general Hindu concepts such as liberation or dharma and some took their best guess from the term 'relationship' and wrote about purusha and prakriti as anthropomorphic deities who were either married or siblings that were either devoted to or hated one another.

#### Question 2d

Almost all candidates had ample knowledge about murti and their use in worship but many either struggled with or missed the reference in the question to murti not being needed. Some wrote only about why murti are important, others used this to help them identify ideas which were more focussed on the question. A range of approaches proved useful here with some candidates writing about alternative forms of worship, about different ways of encountering the divine or about forms of Hinduism which don't involve personal deity at all and others taking a more philosophical or abstract perspective and writing about saguna and nirguna concepts of Brahman. Overall the question was satisfactorily answered. However, it was judged by examiners that many candidates in the mid-range of marks could have benefited from taking a little more time to read the question and focus their responses more tightly.

#### Question 2e

Many responses to this stimulus were overly simplistic, offering descriptive accounts of different festivals before giving a generic conclusion about personal choice in regard to which to celebrate. Most candidates had plenty of detail to give about this and other festivals - interestingly candidates who had missed the substance of question 2b often had such detail when it came to this question but some found it challenging to consider that such an issue as the celebration of a religious festival might be a matter on which there are differences of opinion. Candidates who did find points for discussion considered issues such as whether there are other practices that are more important than festivals, or whether devotion to a particular deity might affect views on this particular festival.

## **J625/06 Religion, Philosophy and Ethics in the Modern Worlds from a Christian Perspective**

### **General Comments:**

Centres should be congratulated and praised for the excellent way candidates have been taught and been prepared for this new exam. This is a new specification, a new style of question paper and a new way of assessment this year. The quality of the candidates' responses was generally very high and many utilised additional answer booklets. Some wrote up to twenty pages. All four topics were covered very well and an impressive array of biblical and other sources of wisdom and authority were evident throughout the paper. There has been a significant move to teaching more explicitly Christian perspectives on topics, rather than general sociological responses, resulting in very good Religious Studies knowledge and understanding of the syllabus. This is very pleasing to see.

The candidates appeared to have no issue with the wording of the questions and provided a wide range of knowledge and understanding about denominational beliefs, teachings and practices. Differentiation between the candidates was due to their ability to learn, use knowledge learnt over the course, and to apply their understanding skills to questions throughout the paper. There was a significant number who were able to explain and evaluate to a very high standard and performed well under pressure.

It is apparent that some centres are still coming to terms with the new criteria and new rubric within the Question Paper. Some candidates focussed too much on non-Christian perspectives or a personal view, particularly in the (d) part questions, as candidates were still writing about the viewpoints of atheists and agnostics at the expense of diverse Christian perspectives. Some were still including a personal viewpoint. Many did not come back to the stimulus in the (d) questions. Some opted for a formulaic approach used in the old specification without realising that the assessment objective for part (d) AO2 is different from the old specification part (d) questions, where a personal opinion was required. This is no longer a requirement.

The Question Paper required candidates to know a lot about Christian beliefs, teachings and practices around 4 key topics and to use the knowledge to demonstrate skills of understanding, analysis and evaluation. All part (a) questions provided an appropriate way into the paper with many achieving full marks for three valid points. Good practice was seen when candidates took note of all the strap lines in the questions, or addressed all the components of the individual questions, e.g. (c) questions, or in the (d) questions.

Weaker responses were where there were general statements about teachings without any examples, or references to 'some Christians' and 'others' without any specific examples. Also evident were generalisations or inaccuracies about sources of wisdom and/or authority. For example, it was quite common to read that Jesus taught the Ten Commandments or said "an eye for an eye" in Q3(b). It would be useful for candidates to know the differences and links between the Old and New Testaments.

Weaker responses for AO2 were where one saw a response based on sociological views and examples with little reference to Christian beliefs and practices, or long paragraphs stating what atheists/agnostics believe (at the expense of reference to Christianity) and long personal evaluations. More attention to the strap lines on part (d) would avoid this to a great extent.

Most managed to finish the paper, although there were some who did not finish on time, or were rushed at the end so that the quality of their later responses was not of the same standard as earlier responses. Some lost time by writing too much description in (a) questions which are points marked questions. With so little thinking or planning time, many candidates were forced to write very quickly, under pressure of time, leading to issues of legibility, clarity and accuracy.

SPAG was generally very good.

### **Comments on Individual Questions:**

#### **Question No. 1 Relationships and families**

**Q1(a)** The question was asking for details about the purposes of marriage often stated during the ceremony itself but other responses were accepted, provided they were Christian. Time was lost when candidates wrote in lengthy sentences. This is a points marked question. Most stated the following, which secured full marks, “for procreation, for sexual relationships, to make promises to God”. Other common responses included ‘it is a sacrament, the right situation to bring up a family, to unite people to one another or to God, to show love to one another and God, and to create a new family unit’.

**Q1(b)** This question required candidates to know about at least two different attitudes towards divorce and describe them. Both breadth and depth were required in this question. The higher level descriptors ask for sources of wisdom and authority and different viewpoints within Christianity. The main differences between Roman Catholic and Church of England denominations were most frequently cited. Where a candidate could describe the source of teachings, where the attitudes came from, or how they were put into practice for both groups in detail, higher levels were achieved. In some cases one denomination’s attitude towards divorce was described in more detail than the other. Both need to be known equally to get the full marks.

**Q1(c)** There are several components to this question which make it complex. There is also a significant strap line to this question which is part of the rubric of the question. Candidates are expected to refer to sources of wisdom and authority in their response. Sources of wisdom and authority could include references to culture, religious groups, customs, laws, religious leaders as well as sacred texts. However, if there was no obvious source of wisdom and authority, candidates could not get any marks for AO1, as this was a requirement for the question. However they could still achieve marks for AO2.

In this question the candidate had to understand that this was a ‘how’ question, about Christian teachings (which means biblical or denominational teachings) and the way they influence roles of men and women in families. Both Assessment Objectives are being assessed in the same question but the balance of marks between the two assessments is very different. Candidates needed to show knowledge of teachings and then explain how they lead different denominations to teach about the roles of men and women in families. The focus was upon both genders and how they should operate within families. Most explained the origins of the ‘Complementary view’ versus the ‘Egalitarian view’. Teachings connected to the Adam and Eve narrative in Genesis, St Paul’s teachings about all being one in Christ or women being submissive to their husbands, Catholic and Anglican positions on family life were the most common sources of wisdom and authority.

It is important that teachers explain the impact of interpretations by Christians of biblical texts on roles of families. Despite knowing the biblical quotes not all candidates could then explain how they related to the roles of men and women in the family. Some candidates seemed to think that the Bible taught that women are meant to be kept at the sink, wash, clean up, look after and do whatever a husband orders. Candidates need to understand the context of texts, the times written and how the texts have been interpreted over time, resulting in traditional views about the roles of men and women compared to nowadays.

The question did not require references to how women were treated in church. Some candidates went off at a tangent and started describing differences between women and male priests in churches, or they just focussed upon the role of the women largely, instead of both genders.

**Q1(d)** In all (d) questions there is a stimulus and a requirement to discuss the statement, referring to a range of Christian views, and then evaluating them. It is expected that candidates use material from Beliefs and Teachings and Practices paper in their response and many did so. There is not a requirement for a personal, atheistic or agnostic response. However where these were given consideration was given as to how much it contributed to the overall level of response. There are four levels of response (LoR) which were used to assess the quality of the response. Where there was little evidence of different Christian perspectives, or comparisons between the different perspectives or evidence of a judgement of the issue, it resulted in limiting the quality of the response to Level 2. Where the response read as a series of paragraphs, it often only reached top of Level 3. The candidates that reached Level 4 were those that were engaged in a dialogue either throughout the response with each paragraph or brought it together in a conclusion that was balanced, with a well worked judgement on the issue. Level 3 and 4 responses included a broad range of perspectives from Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, and other Protestant traditions, with reasoned arguments and discussion between the views. The sources of wisdom and authority were explained in detail and linked to the issue.

The question was accessible to all. Most could form a discussion about equality but not all related it to the 'never' part of the statement. Many responses used material already quoted in Q1(c), i.e. the Genesis accounts of Adam and Eve, the Fall or St Paul's teachings in his Epistles. Jesus' treatment of men and women in his day was used to discuss whether if Jesus came today how issues of gender inequality would be handled by him. Differences in priesthood amongst the denominations were discussed widely. Egalitarian view versus complementary view on the roles of men and women, with relevant biblical quotes were the most common response in this question. Some discussed gender inequality in the work place and how Christian leaders are engaged in protesting against this situation. Most concluded that the Catholic Church was still traditional and the Protestant Churches were more liberal in its views about equality.

## **Question No. 2 The existence of God**

**Q2(a)** Most candidates outlined briefly the Teleological Argument by Paley and secured maximum marks. A few provided details of the Moral or Cosmological Argument. Marks were still credited even if the candidate did not know the name of one of the arguments but was able to give some description of one of them. However, a few muddled the Cosmological and Teleological Argument or did not know of various philosophical

arguments for the existence of God. Some spent too long on this question describing in too much detail. It was possible to gain 3 marks by writing simply “The teleological argument (1 mark) which says that the world is so complex and intricate there must a designer (2 mark) and that designer is God (3 marks).”

**Q2(b)** The question required candidates to describe one religious experience. This was well answered with the majority of candidates securing at least Level 2 marks. The most popular responses included charismatic experiences, such as glossalia, being ‘slain in the spirit’, and Pentecostal worship. Others referred to miracles with examples past and present, or visions such as Bernadette at Lourdes received being the most common described. In the highest level responses one saw details about the impact or effect upon individuals or groups of the experience.

**Q2(c)** This question had three parts to it which had to be linked in order to secure the higher LoR, as well as evidence of good analysis and explanation/evaluation of the religious knowledge used in their response. The candidate had to know about different Christian beliefs, about the nature of God and why there were differences for these beliefs. If the candidate did not provide evidence of sources of wisdom and authority for AO1 then no marks could be credited.

For AO1 many candidates were able to show a deep understanding of beliefs about God’s nature with reference to denominational differences about The Trinity or ‘the Inconsistent Triad’ but the ‘why’ part of the question was not always addressed. Consequently it resulted in a Level 2 response for AO2. For AO2 Level 3 and 4 responses, one saw candidates explaining the why part being due to different interpretations of biblical texts by Christians, providing examples of contrasting passages in the OT and NT about God’s nature or denominational teachings from religious leaders that influenced people’s understanding about God’s nature or personal experiences of God in their lives.

**Q2(d)** As with Q1(d) there is the same rubric to the question and so the comments made above apply to this question, as do the comments about LoR.

Many candidates secured good marks for this question in both Assessment Objectives. The statement provided a good stimulus for candidates to show their knowledge and understanding of ‘Inconsistent Triad’, the Augustinian theodicy, the Irenaeus theodicy, the impact of The Fall on Christian beliefs, the argument about freewill being given to God’s created people, the story of Job and life being a test for Christians, Christ’s sacrifice for the sins of the world, the purpose of life on earth being a preparation for heaven or hell, the role of the Devil and how God suffers and punishes people. Sources of wisdom and authority were used throughout the response. Candidates had been taught a lot about the problem of evil and suffering and how Christians reconcile a ‘good God’ with one who causes suffering.

Some candidates chose to argue that human suffering was the reason why they and others did not believe in a God or a ‘good God’ but it lacked Christian perspectives so could not get above Level 2 response. Some did not address the question about the existence of a ‘good God’ and changed the question to be one about the existence of God in general. This impacted upon how well they secured marks in the LoR.

### Question No. 3 Religion, peace and conflict

**Q3(a)** This is another points marked question that could be answered with three simple bullet points. One was looking for general conditions that make a Just War for Christians. The most common responses to this question were, “it is a last resort, no civilians should be harmed and it must be started by a proper authority”. Most candidates secured full marks, and those that did not, included ambiguous statements about war.

Responses that said ‘Jus ad bellum, Jus in bello and Jus post bellum’ were not credited. Very specific responses were not credited as they were not part of the wording of the conditions for a Just War. For example if the candidate said that a Just War is one started off by the Pope or a Just War is a war in which nuclear weapons are not used, it could not be credited as they were not conditions of a Just War but outcomes of the conditions.

**Q3(b)** The question asked for candidates to show their knowledge and understanding about Christian teachings related to pacifism. There were two approaches to this question and both acceptable. Some candidates were able to show a range of biblical teachings that were relevant to pacifism, explaining them and how they were connected to the issue of pacifism. Another approach that was accepted was descriptions of Absolute Pacifists and Conditional Pacifists and which Christian denominations accepted different teachings from the Bible to support their views.

Unfortunately a few did not know what the word ‘pacifism’ meant and lost marks on this section. The best responses included teachings such as Matthew 5:43 ‘loving one’s enemies’; Psalm 82:3 ‘standing up to the oppressed and defending the weak’; Matthew 5:9 ‘peacemakers being blessed’; various Old Testament references from Micah, Joshua and Joel ‘preparing for war and a time when there will be no war’ and in the garden of Gethsemane Matthew 26:52 when Jesus said “Those who live by the sword will die by the sword”. Some referred to Luke 19:45 when Jesus overthrew the money changes in the temple and showed aggression towards a corrupt group of people in his community. Other teachings outlined were examples from significant religious leaders in positions of responsibility, e.g. the Pope or The Archbishop of Canterbury.

The more general teaching of ‘love thy neighbour’ was often used but it was a teaching that could be used in every issue so, while relevant, one was looking for more specific teachings related to war and peace. A common error was blanketing all teachings as Jesus teaching them, e.g. Jesus taught that ‘an eye for an eye, etc....’ There does need to be an understanding by the candidates of the difference between Old Testament and New Testament teachings, the context of the times when various teachings were said and by whom.

**Q3(c)** This was a challenging question. Candidates needed to show knowledge about Christian attitudes towards terrorism and the reasons why there were different attitudes. Some candidates seemed to think all Christians would have nothing to do with terrorism and it was always wrong. Many candidates were able to describe a full range of attitudes towards terrorism from total rejection of any form of terrorism to understanding why in certain circumstances the use of terrorism may be necessary but the ‘why’ part of the question was implied more, rather than being explicitly answered. The question also required evidence of sources of wisdom and authority. If there was no such evidence it got no marks for AO1.



The most common sources of wisdom and authority used in response were Quakers and Roman Catholic teachings and practices towards terrorists, using many of the teachings referred to in Q3(b). Camilo Torres, the IRA, Desmond Tutu's Truth and Reconciliation programme, application of the Just War Theory, life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer or Liberation Theology were key facts used to explain different attitudes towards terrorism. AO2 Level 4 responses were where different Christian attitudes were explained and connected to either different interpretations of scripture, denominational teachings, or what had happened to Christians throughout history that influenced beliefs and practices, hence why there were different attitudes towards terrorism.

**Q3(d)** As with Q1(d) there is the same rubric to the question and so the comments made above apply to this question, as do the comments about LoR.

Many candidates had much to write about how difficult it is to forgive people when they have done something seriously wrong towards another person, such as raping or murdering a relative. However there was a lack of Christian perspectives or teachings connected to this issue by some candidates. Some candidates used the all-encompassing teachings of 'loving everyone' or 'being kind to everyone' or 'not going to war' and 'being peaceful towards one another' but did not address the issue about whether it is possible for Christians to forgive every time.

The better responses included teachings such as The Prodigal Son (Luke 15) John 8 and the adulterous women, Luke 23 Jesus praying for forgiveness from the Cross, The Lord's Prayer and the parable of the unmerciful servant and how many times one should forgive someone. Other important knowledge used to show understanding of the issue was the sacrament for confession and reconciliation for Christians and the need to repent and feel forgiveness. Several knew of Christians who had been able or unable to forgive people who had wronged them, e.g. Michael Saward, Mary Johnson or Julie Nicholson. Others discussed the loving nature of God and his willingness to forgive humanity's sins and that Christians should follow this example.

Some candidates argued that forgiveness is only possible if there is repentance on the part of the wrong-doer and others talked about the importance of being able to offer forgiveness always in order that Christians are able to move on with their lives. Where there was little evidence of Christian perspectives or knowledge, the maximum level that could be credited was Level 2 for AO2.

#### **Question No.4 Dialogue between religious and non-religious beliefs and attitudes**

**Q4(a)** There was a very broad interpretation of the term 'public life' in the question. However, it had to be three different ways, not just three examples that were of the same genre. Most people secured full marks. The most common responses were bank holidays, festivals, houses of parliament, religious schools, RE lessons, monarchy and links to Church of England, laws made in this country, evangelising round door to door and charity work for all in need by various churches. More unusual responses were use of Christian names on forms, rites of passage such as funerals and marriages, singing of hymns at sporting occasions and past historical events connected to Great Britain. Where candidates wrote 'Christmas, Easter and St Valentine's day' only 1 mark was given, as they were examples of celebrations.

**Q4(b)** This question has a strap line which is common to all (b) questions in J625/06-10 papers. Like other strap lines such as sources of wisdom and authority in (c) questions, there is a requirement that candidates must acknowledge the fact that religious traditions of Great Britain are diverse, but mainly Christian. If there is no such reference then a response cannot move out of Level 2 (4) marks maximum. However, it is not enough to just repeat the statement from the Question Paper in the answer. It has to be used in connection to the subject matter of the question. In this case the subject of the question was inter-faith dialogue and what it meant for Christians. Many lost out on full marks because they did not connect the strap line to the rest of their answer.

Level 3 responses and above were where candidates recognised that there are many religions represented in this country, that Christianity is still the dominant religion in this country but that there is a need to share, understand one another and work together for the common good of all in this country. Some were able to explain why some Christians do not believe in inter-faith dialogue. That was an acceptable response as well.

Many could describe examples of inter-faith dialogue, citing examples in their own communities. Unfortunately some misunderstood the term 'inter-faith dialogue' with 'intra-faith dialogue' and described what it meant for different denominations within Christianity and therefore could not be given any marks for this question.

**Q4(c)** This question was answered very well by most candidates. They had been taught about the issue of abortion very well and understood how Christians respond differently to this issue. A source of wisdom and authority is a requirement for this question and failure to refer to them resulted in no marks for AO1.

Most candidates provided details about Roman Catholic and Anglican views on abortion, backing it up with a range of teachings to support the views. These included biblical texts or sources from papal encyclicals or General Synod papers from the Church of England to show how different denominations have responded to abortion. There were some inaccuracies in some candidates' responses such as 'all liberal Christians allow abortion for any reason' or 'all Catholics refuse abortions under any circumstances'. But most candidates understood the complexity of the perspectives by Christians and the debate between the rights of the unborn child with the rights of the mother.

**Q4(d)** As with Q1(d) there is the same rubric to the question and so the comments made above apply to this question. However, in this questions the LoR should include both Christian and non-Christian perspectives. This is a requirement of this section of the syllabus.

This question was either answered quite well or poorly. Many candidates knew about the relationship between how parliament, the monarchy and the constitution in Great Britain are connected to the Church of England and were able to cite examples of how this country is ruled with religious influences. Some knew about theocracies and gave examples, such as Iran, and discussed whether that would work here in the UK.

Similarly many knew about the latest census data and what messages were coming from that data with the growing influence of secularisation and groups such as the National Secular Society or the British Humanist organisation campaigning for separation between State and Church in our country. That was good knowledge.

However few seemed to know about teachings on authority and leaders and what the Bible had to say about the relationship between politics and religion. This is an area which could be improved upon.

Candidates had limited views about Christian perspectives about whether religion should always influence how a country is ruled.

Others talked in very general terms about having a diverse population, made up of many religions and denominations, and that it was not fair to have one faith group having influence on a country and affect how it is ruled. Others said that religion is dying in this country and that soon there will be no influence by religion. Such responses showed a lack of understanding about the complexity of religious groups in this country and worldwide. Social media perhaps polarises views and does not present the broad picture of how religion influences morals and values in a positive way.

Where candidates scored Level 2 responses or below they tended to be lacking in detailed knowledge about how this country is governed, or what the Bible has to say about authority and ruling a country or a wider perspective about religious influences around the world.

# **J625/07 Religion, Philosophy and Ethics in the Modern World from a Muslim Perspective**

## **General Comments:**

Examiners felt overall that the standard was lower than might be expected, with many candidates struggling to identify and use key concepts from the specification and to demonstrate recognition of diversity of tradition or thought within Islam. Topics 2 and 4 produced noticeably weaker responses overall than topics 1 and 3.

All questions and sections of questions were compulsory and almost all candidates at least attempted the entire paper. Very few wholly blank scripts were observed. There was an increase, when compared to the legacy specification, of candidates attempting question sections out of the order in which they are written on the paper. This had no clear impact on the content or quality of the responses, but it worth noting that many candidates taking such an approach mis-numbered the sections.

In terms of general examination skills candidates showed a marked contrast to the legacy specification in that there were very few extended answers offered as responses for the short answer a) part questions, suggesting most candidates were using their time effectively. More attention could have been given to specific command words however, and also the difference between terms like ‘teaching’ and ‘belief’.

Responses to d) part questions appeared, for the most part, to have been constructed around formulae intended to ensure the presentation of multiple view points and the sources / justifications for them; however, as noted above, candidates often seemed unclear to the basis on which different viewpoints might be offered or even to the possibility that they might exist. Where candidates did attempt to give different views they still struggled to do so in a discursive or evaluative manner that would enable them to access the highest level of marks. This is a common problem with encouraging formulaic approaches to stimulus questions as the different views are often presented only as additional knowledge. With the new level descriptors explicitly limiting the marks available for pure knowledge to 3 out of 15, and the AO2 descriptors expressly requiring developed discussion and analysis for the higher levels simply adding more views in this way does not automatically equate to higher marks. Different blocks of knowledge are discursive only in that they describe different perspectives on the stimulus and candidates using this approach therefore struggled to demonstrate the ‘comment on’ and/or ‘comparison of’ elements required for the higher AO2 marks.

## **Comments on Individual Questions:**

### **Question 1a**

This question was generally well answered with most candidates accessing full marks.

### **Question 1b**

Most candidates gained some marks here, but there were a lot of common mistakes - such as confusing contraception and abortion, writing a general description of methods of contraception

and using moral principles and teachings that are Christian (usually Catholic) rather than Islamic in nature.

### **Question 1c**

Candidates found this a challenging question, with very few answering it as set. Most candidates were familiar with at least some Islamic teachings about treating women well (although not necessarily referencing equality), with the important role played by mothers being the most commonly used of these. The best responses then explained that discrimination was wrong because it was not treating women well and so was in opposition to these teachings.

Some candidates wrote about equality in general terms, including contemporary social norms and expectations. These responses usually had some limited creditable content but lacked substantive material about teachings, as required by the question. Another issue which side-tracked some from the question was that of modest dress. This could have been linked to the issue of discrimination but few candidates did so.

A small number of candidates responded to this question by outlining all the ways in which women are discriminated against either within Islamic associated cultures and traditions or in contemporary society as a whole. This, again, rather misses the point of the question.

### **Question 1d**

The stimulus in this question gave rise to some confusion as to what was being asked about and various interpretations were seen. Some candidates focussed on the term 'celebrate' very literally and wrote about whether Muslims prefer a simple or an elaborate wedding ceremony; some focussed on the distinction between arranged and forced marriage; others considered whether certain combinations of people were forbidden by Islam, such as homosexual or inter-religious marriages. Some candidates who considered homosexual marriage in depth were distracted by this into a general discussion of same-sex relationships.

In the main while most candidates found an issue related to marriage about which they had some knowledge the question was not well answered overall, and the level of discussion it generated was limited. Candidates struggled to identify and explain different views within Islam and, as in other questions; there was a tendency to fall back on Christian attitudes and justifications for them.

### **Question 2a**

Almost all candidates answered this question well, gaining all three available marks.

### **Question 2b**

Most candidates began their responses to this question well, generally making a strong statement about Allah as the creator and maintainer of the world. But from this point there was a great deal of diversity - the better responses brought in different philosophical arguments, outlined Islamic beliefs about the process through which creation was accomplished or explained how Islam and scientific views could be compatible. But a large number of candidates continued from the creation of the world into an account of the creation of humanity (often the details here were Christian) and their status as khalifah, which was not asked for.

Although there were candidates who considered philosophical arguments most of these were generic; few candidates seemed aware of the Islamic Kalam cosmological argument.

### **Question 2c**

Overall this was a poorly answered question. Candidates seemed unclear as to who 'inspirational people' might be in the context of Islam and most left this vague, talking about inspirational or motivating speakers in the abstract. Only a few specified imams or preachers in this context and similarly small numbers referenced Muhammad or any other Prophets. Candidates were similarly vague about the contribution such people might make to the faith of a Muslim, with most concluding that they might set them a good example or be a source of information about what Islam teaches.

### **Question 2d**

Another poorly answered question with candidates struggling to define mystical experience. Many wrote about miracles and/or the general practices of the religion instead. Candidates who dealt with this confusion best were the ones who largely ignored the phrase and wrote about different ways a Muslim might get close to Allah; this gained them some marks but such responses were inherently limited by the candidates' lack of understanding of the question. A small number of candidates mentioned Sufism and an even smaller number were able to juxtapose this with other Islamic traditions of worship.

The most successful answers were those which focussed on the experiences of Muhammad, such as the Night of Power with a consideration of the impact these had on the development and existence of Islam providing the discursive, evaluative component of the response.

### **Question 3a**

This question gave rise to very generalised responses, but this was creditable since the question does not specify Islamic teachings. Some candidates did attempt to use Islamic teachings but few did so successfully. Most responses, of both the Islamic and the generic variety, were actually justifications of conditional pacifism, raising the question of candidates' familiarity with the concept they had been asked about.

As elsewhere Christian teachings made an appearance here. Where correct these were creditable due to the wording of the question, but a large number of candidates were under the impression that the prophet Muhammad was an absolute pacifist, and a few even credited him with the instruction to his followers to turn the other cheek. The erroneous (or at best misleadingly simplified) claim that Islam literally translates as 'peace' was also commonly seen.

### **Question 3b**

Most candidates were familiar with the term jihad and less able candidates wrote about both kinds of it, rather than targeting their knowledge to the question. The majority of candidates were able to give at least some of the conditions under which lesser jihad can be declared and/or the acceptable forms of behaviour during it. Literal translations of the term jihad were commonly used and mostly correct, and the majority of candidate but there was a high degree of confusion between lesser and greater jihad.

### **Question 3c**

Most candidates had a lot to say for this question, although much of it was very generic. The best responses discussed social justice, the impact of islamophobia and the desire to demonstrate a better side to Islam and the concept of Islam being a religion of peace. Some candidates made reference to the Sunnah of the Prophet, but with varying degrees of success due to the confusion noted with regard to 3a about the Prophet Muhammad's pacifist stance.

### **Question 3d**

Social justice did not appear to be a well-understood term in the main, with a large minority of candidates conflating it with criminal justice. Those who did understand the term were able to clearly state that social justice is important and give some generic reasons as to why but struggled to connect these with Islam. The best responses considered concepts such as zakat, reflecting on whether social justice was a concept implied in such requirements or something separate and of lesser importance.

### **Question 4a**

Another poorly answered question; many candidates struggled with the term humanism, or values or both. Some listed three core Muslim beliefs, or gave religious concepts like belief in God and the need to worship 'properly'. Others made observations of similarity that, while possibly true, cannot really be described as values. Very few candidates gained full marks.

### **Question 4b**

There was an almost universal failure to understand the term interfaith dialogue. The overwhelming majority of candidates wrote about how challenging it is to be a Muslim in a Christian country with bishops in the House of Lords and Christian oriented school holidays; they seemed unaware of concepts such as freedom of speech, religion and worship and implied, even if they did not state it outright, that public demonstrations of non-Christian belief are unlawful in the UK. Of the small number that did attempt to reference the concept of interfaith dialogue around half confused it with intrafaith dialogue and wrote about how different communities of Muslims stay in touch with one another.

### **Question 4c**

This question was generally answered with a statement to the effect that Muslims like equality because Allah made everyone. Many candidates left it there. Some added a similar observation that society also likes equality and has laws to demonstrate that. But very few made any kind of reference, even a passing one, to the reasons for such laws or the differences between Muslim and secular views. Many candidates appeared unfamiliar with the term 'secular' and generally ignored it. Some approached the question by giving a correct definition of secular and then writing nothing else.

The best answers used specific examples where attitudes might differ such as homosexuality or the rights of women. Overall, however, this was a poorly answered question.

**Question 4d**

While not all candidates seemed entirely clear on what 'inclusive' might mean in this context most did manage some generalised discussion about anyone being able to become a Muslim and Islam not having any initiatory requirements. References to 'people of the book' and the different attitudes that Muslims might have towards monotheist and polytheist religions were also fairly common.



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