



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Religious Studies A
Paper 1: Area of Study 1 – Study of Religion
Option 1B - Christianity

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Summer 2025

Publications Code 1RA0_1B_2506_ER

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Introduction

GCSE (9-1) Religious Studies Religious Studies A Paper 1B: Area of Study 1 –Christianity

The paper contributes to 50% of the overall award.

The assessment consists of four questions and candidates must answer all questions. The details of the assessment content are provided in the specification. Centres are to use this, rather than other published resources when planning the course content.

This area of study comprises a study in-depth of Christianity as a lived religion in the United Kingdom and throughout the world.

There are four sections:

- Beliefs and Teachings;
- Practices;
- Sources of Wisdom and Authority;
- Forms of Expression and Ways of Life.

Candidates had studied Christianity within the context of the wider British society.

Please note: AO stands for 'Assessment Objective' SPaG stands for 'Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar'

Question 1a

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings

Bullet point. 1.2 The creation of the universe and of humanity: **the biblical account of creation** and divergent ways in which it may be understood by Christians, including as literal and metaphorical; the role of the Word and Spirit in creation, including John 1:1–18 and Genesis 1–3; the importance of creation for Christians today. (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was: 'Outline three of the seven days of Creation.'

Candidates are asked to 'Outline' on (a) items. Therefore, lists can reach a maximum of one mark.

GENERIC advice for centres to what constitutes a list

An example: Outline 3 characteristics of God:

- God is creator (1 mark)
- God is creator, judge and lawgiver (1 mark for list or sentence)
- God is creator, busy and distant. (1 mark for the sentence identifying one correct piece of information)
- Busy, distant and God is creator, (1 mark for the sentence identifying one correct piece of information)
- Creator, judge, lawgiver (1 mark for list)
- Creator, busy, distant (0 Marks) (all three elements need to be correct for 1 mark)
- Creator, judge, distant (0 marks)

Examiner comment: The majority of candidates were awarded 3 marks. Candidates were not required to give a day for example 'on day seven...' but where they did they had to be correct to gain the mark.

Examiner advice: Candidates should write three sentences containing one piece of information in each. There is no need for development: it will not receive credit.

Question 1b

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings

The question asked candidates to 'Explain two reasons why Christians think the Incarnation is important.'

Bullet point 1.3 The Incarnation: the nature and importance of the person of Jesus Christ as the incarnate Son of God; the biblical basis of this teaching, including John 1:1–18 and 1 Timothy 3:16 and **its significance for Christians today**. (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

Examiner comment Most candidates answered this confidently. Candidates had been well prepared to know that it was God becoming flesh and many could quote John 1. Where candidates did not do well, they thought the word Incarnation was resurrection and wrote about the wrong thing.

Question 1c

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings

Bullet point 1.2 The nature and significance of salvation and the role of Christ within salvation: law, sin, grace and Spirit, the role of Christ in salvation, including John 3:10–21 and Acts 4:8–12; the nature and significance of atonement within Christianity and its link to salvation.

The question asked was: 'Explain two ways grace is shown through salvation'

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (c) items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed for 4 marks. Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom a quotes or examples. The development must be of the reason given and to the question asked. The reasons then should be supported with a 'reference to a source of wisdom', this must support the reason given and cannot be awarded twice. Therefore, if it is used as development, it does not gain a second mark for the source.

GENERIC advice for centres to what constitutes a source of wisdom

- The candidates do not have to reference a quote or quote it word for word.
- If markers of candidate work in centres are unsure if the quote will be accepted, use a search engine. Enter the gist of the paraphrase and 'Bible' or 'Christian teaching'.
- If the candidate states that it is in John 1:18 and then states another verse from John – then this can be awarded. We are not holding candidate to 'verses' but it must be the correct book.
- If the candidate gives the paraphrase and then puts (John 1:18) in brackets the paraphrase can have the mark and the bracketed reference is ignored.
- If a candidate quotes Jesus and it was Paul or vice versa; and the quote is not accredited to them, it is not awarded.

Examiner comment: Most candidates answered this question well. Candidates identified the role of God's love in salvation. Where candidates did not do well, they did not understand the word grace.

Question 1d

The focus of the marking changes from AO1 to AO2 on the (d) items. The candidates are assessed on AO2, Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief. This constitutes 50% of the overall mark.

The question is '**Evaluate**' this statement **considering the arguments for and against and reach a justified conclusion** – there must be some consideration of the arguments (appraise, judge the value of, the arguments to reach the higher levels).

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings

Bullet point 1.6 Christian eschatology: divergent Christian teachings about life after death, including the nature and significance of resurrection, judgment, heaven, and hell and purgatory, with reference to the 39 Articles of Religion and Catholic teachings; how beliefs about life after death are shown in the Bible, including reference to 2 Corinthians 5:1–10 and **divergent understandings as to why they are important for Christians today**. (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was *(d) "Christians choose to live better lives because of their belief in life after death."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Christian teachings
- refer to different Christian points of view
- reach a justified conclusion.

Examiner comment In response to this question many students gave generic answers of 'yes they do and no they don't and did not develop them sufficiently.

The best responses approached the question by arguing that Christians were taught this through the parable of the sheep and goats and explained how this teaching could affect how a Christian lived. Balanced by those Christians who believed that all people go to heaven or that it is through grace you are saved not good works citing the thief on the cross.

Examiner advice: centres should refer to training materials online. Candidates require the religious understanding of the diversity within the religious tradition, and the arguments for and against before they can begin to evaluate.

Question 2a

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Practices

Bullet point 2.2 The role of the sacraments in Christian life and their practice in two denominations: the role of the sacraments/ordinance as a whole; the nature and importance of the meaning and celebration of baptism and **the Eucharist** in at least two denominations, including reference to the 39 Articles XXV–XXXVI; divergent Christian attitudes towards the use and number of sacraments in Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant traditions. (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was 'Outline three things that take place during the Eucharist.'

Examiner comment: Candidates answered this question well, they had knowledge of the rite and what happens there.

Question 2b

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Practices

Bullet point 2.4 Pilgrimage: the nature, history and purpose of pilgrimage, including interpretations of Luke 2:41–43; the significance of the places people go on pilgrimage; divergent Christian teachings about whether pilgrimage is important for Christians today, with specific reference to Catholic and Protestant understandings; **the activities associated with**, and significance of, Jerusalem, Iona, **Taize** and Walsingham. (*bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was 'Explain two activities that a pilgrim may do on a pilgrimage to Taizé.'

Examiner comment: Many candidates gave generic answers about pilgrimages to religious sites but they did not give specific answers about Taize.

Examiner advice: Refer to the specification bullet point and cover all the different parts of it. These bullet points are the basis of question setting.

Question 2c

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Practices

Bullet point 2.5 Christian religious celebrations: the nature and history of Christian festivals in the church year, including Christmas and Easter; **the significance of celebrating Advent** and Christmas; the significance of celebrating Holy Week and Easter, with reference to interpretations of 1 Corinthians 15:12–34.

The question asked was: 'Explain two reasons why the celebration of Advent is important to many Christians.'

Examiner comment Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on © items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed for 4 marks. Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom, a quote or examples. The development must be of the reason given and to the question asked. The reasons then should be supported with a 'reference to a source of wisdom', this must support the reason given and cannot be awarded twice. Therefore, if it is used as development, it does not gain a second mark for the source.

Most candidates responded well to this question. On occasions answers referred to lent instead of Advent. Very few candidates responded with a source of wisdom.

Examiner advice: Centres struggling to find sources of wisdom should refer to the specification and/or previous mark schemes.

Question 2d

Candidates were assessed on Section Two. Practices

Bullet point 2.2 Christian teachings about the nature and importance of sexual relationships: divergent Christian teachings about sexual relationships; Christian attitudes towards sexual relationships outside of marriage and homosexuality, including interpretations of 1 Corinthians 6:7–20; **divergent Christian** and non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) attitudes to sexual relationships, including the acceptance of sexual relationships outside marriage and **homosexuality** and Christian responses to them. *(Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.)*

The question asked was "The most important thing a Christian can do is spend time in prayer."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Christian teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

Examiner comment: This question engaged candidates of all abilities and produced a wide range of marks. All candidates should be encouraged to answer every question because every mark is important. Many candidates did not gain more than level three because they did not consider the value of the arguments given in answering the question.

Question 3a

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Sources of Wisdom and Authority

Bullet point 3.1 The development and structure of the Bible and its unity as the Word of God: **Old Testament: law, history, prophets, writings**; and New Testament: gospels, letters; divergent interpretations of the authority of the Bible; the Bible as the literal Word of God, the inspired Word of God, source of guidance and teaching, including 2 Timothy 3:16 and Dei Verbum Chapter 3; the implications of these understandings for Christians today. *(Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.)*

The question asked was 'Outline three features of the Old Testament.'

Examiner comment: Candidates answered this question well, they had knowledge of the Old Testament. In some cases, the candidates used examples from the New Testament which could not be credited.

Question 3b

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Sources of Wisdom and Authority

Bullet point 3.4 Jesus as the Word of God, including John 1 and a role model: beliefs and teachings about Jesus as the Word of God; divergent understandings of his role in modelling practices, including Mark 8:34–38; the divergent implications of **Jesus' example** in showing love for others, forgiveness, servanthood, reconciliation and **social justice**, and in establishing the Kingdom of God, the significance of these beliefs for Christians today. (*bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was 'Explain two ways Jesus was an example of working for social justice.'

Examiner comment: Many candidates gave excellent answers to this question offering evidence from the healing of the lepers to the saving of the adulterous woman.

Examiner advice: Refer to the specification bullet point and cover all the different parts of it. These bullet points are the basis of question setting.

Question 3c

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Sources of Wisdom and Authority

Bullet point 3.7 Leaders and leadership in the Church: the laity, ministers (priests/vicars/pastors), bishops and **the pope; the roles and significance of each**, including Ephesians 4:11–12 and Lumen Gentium Chapters 4 and 5; divergent ways in which the leaders support and interact with one another in different denominations; divergent understandings of the importance of each of these leaders in different Christian traditions.

The question asked was: 'Explain two Christian beliefs about the importance of the Pope today.'

Examiner comment Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (c) items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed for 4 marks. Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom, a quote or examples. The development must be of the reason given and to the question asked. The reasons then should be supported with a 'reference to a source of wisdom', this must support the reason given and cannot be awarded twice. Therefore, if it is used as development, it does not gain a second mark for the source.

Many candidates referred to the death of the recent Pope and used this knowledge to explain the importance of the Pope today. The answers were varied and many answered to why the Pope was not important which was also credited as a Christian response.

Examiner advice: The use of world events can enhance the learning and knowledge of candidates.

Question 3d

Candidates were assessed on Section Three. Sources of Wisdom and Authority

Bullet point 3.6 The growth and development of the Church: the establishment, development and growth of the Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and

Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches; **changes in the Church as the Body of Christ**, including interpretations of 1 Corinthians 12, the Filioque controversy and the Reformation; and divergent understandings of the significance of the development of diverse denominations within the Church today. (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was "There is only one Church of God."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Christian teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

Examiner comment: This question was not answered well many candidates wrote about the amount of different church buildings. Those that did discuss the Church as one used the body of Christ in their answers and referred to the Filioque controversy and the Reformation.

Question 4a

Candidates were assessed on Section four: Forms of Expression and Ways of Life

Bullet point 4.3 The meaning and significance of sculpture for Christians: the way these are used to express belief by the artist and those who observe the art, **the way these are used to express belief** with reference to Catechism of the Catholic Church 2501; the divergent ways in which sculptures and statues may be used in church and other settings, for example in Roman Catholic and Anglican churches. (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was 'Outline three ways a statue may be used within a church.'

Examiner comment: Candidates answered this question well, the majority could give three ways they were used from decorating a church to being a focus of worship.

Question 4b

Candidates were assessed on Section four: Forms of Expression and Ways of Life

Bullet point 4.2 The divergent meaning, **significance and purpose of icons within Christianity**; specific reference to the use of icons within Orthodox Christianity and in denominations that may reject their use; the way icons are used to express belief and **as a focus for devotion**, and the divergent ways in which they may be used in church and other settings. (*bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was 'Explain two reasons some Christians use icons within worship.'

Examiner comment: Many candidates still appear not to know the difference between an icon and a painting. There were candidates who had knowledge of the Orthodox use of them. Some candidates read it as idols.

Examiner advice: Make sure that candidates have and clear understanding of words used on the specification that may come up on questions.

Question 4c

Candidates were assessed on Section four: Forms of Expression and Ways of Life

Bullet point 4.4 The purpose and **use of symbolism** and imagery in religious art: the Cross, including reference to Ephesians 2:10–19, fish, and symbols of the four evangelists; the way this symbolism is used to express belief, and **the divergent ways in which they may be used in church and other settings.**

The question asked was: 'Explain two reasons why Christians use symbols.'

Examiner comment: Candidates were well prepared for this topic and answered the question well.

Question 4d

Candidates were assessed on Section four: Forms of Expression and Ways of Life

Bullet point 4.1 The meaning and significance of paintings and drawings within Christianity with reference to two specific pieces and Catechism of the Catholic Church 2502–2503: the way these are used to express belief by the artist and those who observe the art, and the **divergent ways in which paintings and drawings may be used in church and other settings..** (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was "Paintings should be used to spread the gospel."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Christian teachings
- reach a justified conclusion

Examiner comment This question was not answered well many candidates ran out of time. Or wrote about why paintings should be used or not used in churches missing the point about the spreading of the gospel.

Key advice from the examiner:

- Centres must teach to the specification, making sure candidates are prepared for all parts of the bullet points in preparation for the questions
- When tackling a) questions, candidates should write three sentences containing one piece of information in each. There is no need for development: it will not receive credit.
- The explain questions require two developed points, however, students should also be prepared to describe where indicated on the specification.

- The (d) items need an understanding of religion and belief, as well as the ability to evaluate the arguments in order to reach a conclusion. Centres may wish to consider the differentiation of teaching to enable some students of different abilities to concentrate on learning the information needed before embarking on the evaluation.
- Candidates should be directed to read the bullet points in the (d) question and understand that they guide them to which viewpoints they should be providing. Centres may wish to consider identifying on the specification the different traditions/viewpoints within Christianity identified that could be used to answer these questions. The diversity within the religion is the key factor in appraising the arguments. Why do they not all agree?