



*Rewarding Learning*

**ADVANCED SUBSIDIARY (AS)  
General Certificate of Education  
2024**

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## **Religious Studies**

**Assessment Unit AS 8**

*assessing*

**An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion**

**[SRE81]**

**FRIDAY 7 JUNE, MORNING**

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**MARK  
SCHEME**

## **General Marking Instructions**

### ***Introduction***

The main purpose of a mark scheme is to ensure that examinations are marked accurately, consistently and fairly. The mark scheme provides examiners with an indication of the nature and range of candidates' responses likely to be worthy of credit. It also sets out the criteria which they should apply in allocating marks to candidates' responses.

### ***Assessment objectives***

Below are the assessment objectives for **GCE Religious Studies**

Candidates should be able to:

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion, including:
  - religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching;
  - influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies;
  - cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice; and
  - approaches to the study of religion and belief (AO1); and
- analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study (AO2).

### ***Quality of candidates' responses***

In marking the examination papers, examiners should be looking for a quality of response reflecting the level of maturity which may reasonably be expected of a 17 or 18-year-old which is the age at which the majority of candidates sit their GCE examinations.

### ***Flexibility in marking***

Mark schemes are not intended to be totally prescriptive. No mark scheme can cover all the responses which candidates may produce. In the event of unanticipated answers, examiners are expected to use their professional judgement to assess the validity of answers. If an answer is particularly problematic, then examiners should seek the guidance of the Supervising Examiner.

### ***Positive marking***

Examiners are encouraged to be positive in their marking, giving appropriate credit for what candidates know, understand and can do rather than penalising candidates for errors or omissions. Examiners should make use of the whole of the available mark range for any particular question and be prepared to award full marks for a response which is as good as might reasonably be expected of a 17 or 18-year-old GCE candidate.

### ***Awarding zero marks***

Marks should only be awarded for valid responses and no marks should be awarded for an answer which is completely incorrect or inappropriate.

Mark schemes for tasks or questions which require candidates to respond in extended written form are marked on the basis of levels of response which take account of the quality of written communication.

### **Levels of response**

In deciding which level of response to award, examiners should look for the 'best fit' bearing in mind that weakness in one area may be compensated for by strength in another. In deciding which mark within a particular level to award to any response, examiners are expected to use their professional judgement. The following guidance is provided to assist examiners.

- **Threshold performance:** Response which just merits inclusion in the level and should be awarded a mark at or near the bottom of the range.
- **Intermediate performance:** Response which clearly merits inclusion in the level and should be awarded a mark at or near the middle of the range.
- **High performance:** Response which fully satisfies the level description and should be awarded a mark at or near the top of the range.

Each of the two assessment objectives have been categorised into five levels of performance relating to the respective abilities of the candidates. Having identified, for each assessment objective, the band in which the candidate has performed, the examiner should then decide on the appropriate mark within the range for the band.

### **Other Aspects of Human Experience at AS Level**

Candidates must engage with other aspects of human experience, when required, to access Bands 3–5.

### **Synoptic Assessment at A2 Level**

Candidates must support their answer with reference to at least one other unit of study to access Bands 4–5.

Candidates must engage with other aspects of human experience in their AO2 response to access Bands 3–5.

### **Quality of written communication**

Quality of written communication is taken into account in assessing candidates' responses to all tasks and questions that require them to respond in extended written form. These tasks and questions are marked on the basis of levels of response. The description for each level of response includes reference to the quality of written communication.

For conciseness, quality of written communication is distinguished within levels of response as follows:

- Level 1: Quality of written communication is basic.
- Level 2: Quality of written communication is limited.
- Level 3: Quality of written communication is good.
- Level 4: Quality of written communication is very good.
- Level 5: Quality of written communication is excellent.

In interpreting these level descriptions, examiners should refer to the more detailed guidance provided below:

**Level 1 (Basic):** The candidate makes only a basic selection and use of an appropriate form and style of writing. The organisation of material lacks clarity and coherence. There is little or no use of specialist vocabulary. Presentation, spelling, punctuation and grammar are basic and the intended meaning is not clear.

**Level 2 (Limited):** The candidate makes a limited selection and use of an appropriate form and style of writing. The organisation of material may lack clarity and coherence. There is limited use of specialist vocabulary. Presentation, spelling, punctuation and grammar may be such that intended meaning is not clear.

**Level 3 (Good):** The candidate makes a reasonable selection and use of an appropriate form and style of writing. Relevant material is organised with some clarity and coherence. There is good use of appropriate specialist vocabulary. Presentation, spelling, punctuation and grammar are sufficiently competent to make meaning clear.

**Level 4 (Very Good):** The candidate makes a very good selection and use of an appropriate form and style of writing. Relevant material is organised with clarity and coherence. There is very good use of appropriate specialist vocabulary. Presentation, spelling, punctuation and grammar are of a very good standard to make meaning clear.

**Level 5 (Excellent):** The candidate successfully selects and uses the most appropriate form and style of writing. Relevant material is organised with a high degree of clarity and coherence. There is widespread and accurate use of appropriate specialist vocabulary. Presentation, spelling, punctuation and grammar are of a sufficiently high standard to make meaning clear.

Band	AO1 Performance Descriptors	Marks
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An excellent response to the question asked</li> <li>• Demonstrates comprehensive understanding and knowledge</li> <li>• Demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies</li> <li>• A very high degree of relevant evidence and examples</li> <li>• A sophisticated answer with a clear and coherent structure</li> <li>• An extensive range of technical language and vocabulary with accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar</li> </ul>	[21]–[25]
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A very good response to the question asked</li> <li>• Demonstrates a high degree of understanding and almost totally accurate knowledge</li> <li>• Demonstrates a high degree of understanding of the influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies</li> <li>• A very good range of relevant evidence and examples</li> <li>• A mature answer with a mainly clear and coherent structure</li> <li>• A very good use of technical language and vocabulary with a mainly accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar</li> </ul>	[16]–[20]
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A good response to the question asked</li> <li>• Demonstrates a reasonable degree of understanding and mainly accurate knowledge</li> <li>• Demonstrates a reasonable degree of understanding of the influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies</li> <li>• A good range of relevant evidence and examples</li> <li>• A reasonably mature answer with some evidence of structure and coherence</li> <li>• A good use of technical language and vocabulary with a reasonably accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar</li> </ul>	[11]–[15]
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A limited response to the question asked</li> <li>• Demonstrates limited knowledge and understanding</li> <li>• Demonstrates limited understanding of the influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies</li> <li>• A limited range of evidence and/or examples</li> <li>• A limited answer with limited evidence of structure and coherence</li> <li>• A limited use of technical language and vocabulary with a limited command of spelling, punctuation and grammar</li> </ul>	[6]–[10]
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A basic response to the question asked</li> <li>• Demonstrates minimal knowledge and understanding</li> <li>• Demonstrates minimal understanding of the influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies</li> <li>• Little, if any, use of evidence and/or examples</li> <li>• A basic answer with basic structure and coherence</li> <li>• A basic use of technical language and vocabulary with a poor grasp of spelling, punctuation and grammar</li> </ul>	[0]–[5]

Band	AO2 Performance Descriptors	Marks
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A comprehensive and coherent response demonstrating an excellent attempt at critical analysis</li> <li>• An excellent attempt at the application of beliefs, values and teachings to the question asked</li> <li>• An excellent attempt using evidence and reasoning to construct well informed and balanced arguments which are set, where necessary, in the context of other aspects of human experience</li> <li>• An excellent attempt at providing personal insight and independent thought</li> <li>• A sophisticated answer with a clear and coherent structure</li> <li>• An extensive range of technical language and terminology with accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar</li> </ul>	[21]–[25]
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A very good response demonstrating a very good attempt at critical analysis</li> <li>• A very good attempt at the application of beliefs, values and teachings to the question asked</li> <li>• A very good attempt using evidence and reasoning to construct well informed and balanced arguments which are set, where necessary, in the context of other aspects of human experience</li> <li>• A very good attempt at providing personal insight and independent thought</li> <li>• A mature answer with a mainly clear and coherent structure</li> <li>• A very good use of technical language and vocabulary with a mainly accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar</li> </ul>	[16]–[20]
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A reasonable response demonstrating a good attempt at critical analysis</li> <li>• A good attempt at the application of beliefs, values and teachings to the question asked</li> <li>• A good attempt using evidence and reasoning to construct well informed and balanced arguments which are set, where necessary, in the context of other aspects of human experience</li> <li>• A good attempt at providing personal insight and independent thought</li> <li>• A reasonably mature answer with some evidence of structure and coherence</li> <li>• A good use of technical language and vocabulary with a reasonably accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar</li> </ul>	[11]–[15]
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A limited response demonstrating a modest attempt at critical analysis</li> <li>• A limited attempt at the application of beliefs, values and teachings to the question asked</li> <li>• A limited attempt using evidence and reasoning to construct well informed and balanced arguments which struggle to relate, where necessary, to other aspects of human experience</li> <li>• A limited attempt at providing personal insight and independent thought</li> <li>• A limited answer with limited evidence of structure and coherence</li> <li>• A limited use of technical language and vocabulary with a limited command of spelling, punctuation and grammar</li> </ul>	[6]–[10]

Band	AO2 Performance Descriptors	Marks
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A basic response demonstrating little attempt at critical analysis</li> <li>• A basic attempt at the application of beliefs, values and teachings to the question asked</li> <li>• A basic attempt using evidence and reasoning to construct well informed and balanced arguments which fail to relate, where necessary, to other aspects of human experience</li> <li>• A basic attempt at providing personal insight and independent thought</li> <li>• A basic answer with basic structure and coherence</li> <li>• A basic use of technical language and vocabulary with a poor grasp of spelling, punctuation and grammar</li> </ul>	[0]–[5]

Candidates must engage with other aspects of human experience, where necessary, to access Bands 3–5.

## Section A

AVAILABLE  
MARKS

Answer **one** question from Section A

1 (a) Describe the main features of the free will defence argument.

Answers may include:

- A description of the main features of the free will defence argument, evil as part of a Divine plan for the greater good of humanity.
- An exploration of the views of Swinburne concerning the importance of free will for moral growth.
- An exploration of the views of Hick and/or Vardy concerning the primacy of human freewill.
- An exploration of Hick's counterfactual hypothesis, the limitations of a world without human freedom.
- Reference to the importance of God remaining an epistemic distance from humanity for genuine moral development.
- Reference to relevant analogies such as Swinburne's loving parent, Vardy's peasant girl analogy.
- An exploration of Swinburne's justification of immense suffering such as the Holocaust and death.
- An exploration of the roots of the freewill defence in the writings of Irenaeus and the Irenaean theodicy.
- Reference to the misuse of freewill as explored in the Augustinian theodicy, and the consequences of such.
- Reference to the Creation and Fall Narratives in Genesis 1–3.
- The rejection of Mackie's suggestion that God should provide the freedom to only choose the good.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO1)

[25]

(b) "Process theodicy is the least convincing answer to the problem of evil for religious believers." Assess this claim. Justify your answer.

AVAILABLE  
MARKS

Answers may include:

- An exploration of the weaknesses of Process theodicy in addressing the problem of evil.
- A discussion as to whether Process theodicy is ineffective in resolving the Inconsistent Triad as it denies some of the central characteristics of the God of Classical theism.
- A brief delineation of the main teachings of Process theodicy.
- A brief exploration of the problem of evil to be resolved, including the logical and/or evidential problem of evil.
- Reference to the Inconsistent Triad and/or Epicurean paradox.
- Process theodicy as a modern response, surpassing earlier theodices such as the Augustinian or Irenaean theodicy.
- Counter challenges to this claim, Process theodicy as having considerable success in resolving the problem of evil.
- An exploration of the strengths of Process theodicy, Process theodicy as echoing evolutionary theory.
- An exploration of Process theodicy's view of God as a fellow journeyer with humanity.
- An exploration of the advantages of presenting a changing/evolving God, for example, as addressing the issue of changing interpretation of sacred texts.
- Discussion as to whether Process theodicy better supports other theistic views, for example, Hinduism and the concept of phased/multiple creations.
- Reference to alternative solutions as being superior to Process theodicy in resolving the problem of evil, such as the Augustinian theodicy, the Irenaean theodicy and/or the free will defence.
- An exploration as to whether any proposed solution to the problem of evil is in fact successful.
- Process theodicy as challenging the traditional definition and nature of God.
- An exploration as to whether or not Process theodicy leads to a God who is unworthy of worship.
- Reference to the views of writers such as Camus and/or Dostoyevsky concerning the continued, unresolved nature of the problem of evil.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO2)

[25]

50

- 2 (a) "It is not possible to trust witnesses' testimony concerning miracles."  
In light of this statement, explain why atheism rejects miracles.

AVAILABLE  
MARKS

Answers may include:

- An exploration of atheism's rejection of miracles and testimony concerning such phenomena.
- An outlining of reasons for the rejection of witness testimony concerning miracles, such as human error, misdiagnosis, fraud, believer bias, the desire to affirm the positive.
- An exploration of Hume's critique of miracles, notably his statements concerning witness testimony.
- Reference to specific acclaimed miracles and witnesses' testimony challenged by atheism.
- Reference to alternative explanations for miracles such as the placebo effect.
- A rejection of all testimony concerning miracles, since miracles are mere coincidence.
- Reference to the views of relevant atheistic scholars such as Freud, Hitchens, and/or Dawkins.
- An exploration as to whether the very concept of miracle is flawed, can natural laws ever be violated?
- An exploration of God's failure to intervene in cases of horrific evil and suffering.
- An exploration as to whether acclaimed miracles are the product of witness bias, the incentive for theists to assert belief in the miraculous.
- Reference to atheism's rejection of a Deity and thus, any form of Divine intervention.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO1)

[25]

**(b)** Evaluate the view that Aquinas still provides the best explanation of miracles for religious believers. Justify your answer.

AVAILABLE  
MARKS

Answers may include:

- An exploration of the strengths of Aquinas' explanation for religious believers.
- An exploration of Aquinas' support for miracles and continued Divine revelation.
- The strengths of Aquinas' teaching as rooted in biblical teaching and supporting the existence of the God of Classical theism.
- A brief delineation of Aquinas' teaching on miracles, his definition of miracles, his classification of miracles into types.
- Reference to Aquinas' role as a Church Father and significant theologian/philosopher.
- Aquinas' contribution as possibly being surpassed by other thinkers such as Swinburne, Wiles and/or Bultmann.
- Reference to scriptural literalists' emphasis on the primacy of the biblical text, rather than on commentaries on this text.
- A rejection of Aquinas' teaching as rooted in a pre-scientific, medieval mindset.
- Reference to the limited impact of Aquinas' teaching on other faith traditions.
- Reference to theistic challenges to miracles, miracles as revealing the arbitrary and/or unjust nature of Divine intervention.
- Reference to the challenge for theists of God's failure to intervene in human suffering.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO2)

[25]

50

## Section B

AVAILABLE  
MARKS

Answer **one** question from Section B

- 3 (a) Explain the challenges to the Cosmological Argument for the existence of God.

Answers may include:

- An outlining of challenges to the First Cause argument as a whole and/or to any of Aquinas' Three Ways.
- An exploration of Russell's claim that the universe simply exists as 'brute fact'.
- Reference to the fallacy of composition, just because things within the universe have a cause does not mean the universe itself requires a cause.
- A reference to the flawed nature of the argument, nothing can cause itself yet God has no cause.
- Scientific advances such as the Big Bang and /or evolution as undermining or indeed eliminating the need for a First Cause.
- Critiques of any of Aquinas' Three Ways, Aquinas' reliance on medieval science, can things move themselves at a sub-atomic level?
- Reference to Hume's critique of the Cosmological argument, the First Cause argument as supporting polytheism rather than monotheism.
- An exploration as to whether the existence of a First Cause inevitably identifies the God of Classical theism.
- An exploration as to what constitutes 'proof' for God's existence.
- An exploration of the nature of the Cosmological argument as non-empirical and synthetic.
- Reference to the Ontological argument as an a priori argument and a rational and superior form of argument.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO1)

[25]

- (b) “Even in a secular age, people still turn to God in times of crisis.”  
With reference to other aspects of human experience, assess this claim.  
Justify your answer.

Answers may include:

- Consideration of the claim in relation to other aspects of human experience.
- An open-ended response citing relevant historical and/or contemporary examples.
- An assessment of the claim that people still turn to God in times of crisis, even in a secular age.
- Theism’s support for a benevolent and omnipotent God who answers real human needs, notably in times of crisis.
- An exploration of the importance of prayer in times of fear, suffering and death.
- An exploration of the nature and character of God.
- An exploration of the terms ‘crisis’ and ‘secular age’.
- Reference to Freud’s and/or Feuerbach’s view of God as an illusory Father figure, a projection of humanity’s desires.
- An exploration of specific ways in which humanity continues to turn to God, such as individual prayer, worship and/or conversion experiences.
- Reference to the importance of religious rituals such as anointing of the sick and/or funeral rites.
- An exploration of atheism’s argument of theism as reliant on false eschatological hopes.
- Reference to the impact of specific examples of human suffering such as the Holocaust, Covid 19 and war.
- Reference to the Humanist belief that humanity must reject God to engage with real issues here and now.
- Reference to Marx’s rejection of religion as the ‘opium of the people’.
- An exploration of the issue of unanswered prayer.
- Challenge to the phrase that humanity is ‘in a secular age’.
- Reference to the nature of Divine revelation, God as reaching out to humanity in all ages and in all situations.
- An exploration of the diverse forms of communication with God, to adore, worship and give thanks, thus it is not only in crisis that humanity turns to God.
- How in the current age, while there may be issues with the institution of religion, there still remains an interest in spirituality.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

Candidates must engage with other aspects of human experience to access Bands 3–5.

(AO2)

[25]

50

AVAILABLE  
MARKS

4 (a) Give an account of Hick's understanding of religious pluralism.

AVAILABLE  
MARKS

Answers may include:

- An exploration of Hick's understanding of religious pluralism and the concept of the Real.
- An exploration of Hick's views concerning the cultural context of faith, the cultural context as the lens through which the Divine is experienced.
- Reference to the writings of Hick such as 'Evil and the God of Love', 'God and the Universe of Faiths'.
- An exploration of Hick's views as rooted in natural theology, Hick as a critical realist.
- Reference to relevant analogies such as Hick's mountain analogy, and his use of the blind men and the elephant analogy.
- An exploration of Hick's views of religious language, as mythological not literal.
- A definition of the term 'pluralism'.
- Reference to relevant biographical information concerning Hick, his rejection of Christian exclusivism and his work with interfaith groups.
- An exploration as to how pluralism is the antithesis of exclusivism and sectarianism.
- An exploration of the benefits of pluralism in a multi-faith and/or increasingly secular society.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO1)

[25]

(b) With reference to other aspects of human experience, evaluate the view that religious faith always challenges human reasoning. Justify your answer.

Answers may include:

- Consideration of the claim in relation to other aspects of human experience.
- An open-ended response citing relevant historical and/or contemporary examples.
- An exploration as to whether religious faith always stands in opposition to human reason.
- An exploration of atheistic sciences' support for this claim, faith as lacking evidential support.
- An exploration of Kierkegaard's support for this claim, the need for the theist to make the 'leap of faith'.
- Reference to support for this claim within sacred texts, the need for humanity to submit to God's will even in the face of logic, as seen for example in the story of Abraham.
- Reference to the views of scriptural literalists, and the primacy of sacred texts over and above often flawed human reason.
- Specific examples of when human reason is seen to be in opposition to religious faith.
- Reference to clashes between science and religion, for example, differing views on the origins of the universe and/or life on earth.
- A clarification of the terms faith and reason and what constitutes truth/proof.
- Reference to the teaching of fideism.
- Counterchallenges to the stated claim, religion as requiring both faith and reason.
- Reference to the traditional arguments for God's existence as integrating both faith and reason.
- Reference to humanity as a product of Divine creation, human reason as a gift from God.
- An exploration of the views of theistic scientists and/or accommodationists, e.g. Lennox.
- Reference to the views of Einstein, regarding the need to integrate faith and reason.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

Candidates must engage with other aspects of human experience to access Bands 3–5.

(AO2)

[25]

**Total**

**AVAILABLE  
MARKS**

50

**100**