



Rewarding Learning

ADVANCED
General Certificate of Education
2025

Religious Studies

Assessment Unit A2 1

assessing

Themes in the Synoptic Gospels

[ARE11]

FRIDAY 30 MAY, MORNING

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"> • An excellent response to the question asked. • Demonstrates comprehensive understanding and knowledge. • Demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies. • A very high degree of relevant evidence, examples and scholarship. • A sophisticated answer with a clear and coherent structure. • An extensive range of technical language and vocabulary with accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar. 	[17]–[20]
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A very good response to the question asked. • Demonstrates a high degree of understanding and almost totally accurate knowledge. • Demonstrates a high degree of understanding of the influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies. • A very good range of relevant evidence, examples and scholarship. • A mature answer with a mainly clear and coherent structure. • A very good use of technical language and vocabulary with a mainly accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar. 	[13]–[16]
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A good response to the question asked. • Demonstrates a reasonable degree of understanding and mainly accurate knowledge. • Demonstrates a reasonable degree of understanding of the influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies. • A good range of relevant evidence, examples and scholarship. • A reasonably mature answer with some evidence of structure and coherence. • A good use of technical language and vocabulary with a reasonably accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar. 	[9]–[12]
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A limited response to the question asked. • Demonstrates limited knowledge and understanding. • Demonstrates limited understanding of the influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies. • A limited range of evidence, examples and scholarship. • A limited answer with limited evidence of structure and coherence. • A limited use of technical language and vocabulary with a limited command of spelling, punctuation and grammar. 	[5]–[8]
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A basic response to the question asked. • Demonstrates minimal knowledge and understanding. • Demonstrates minimal understanding of the influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies. • Little, if any, use of evidence, examples and scholarship. • A basic answer with basic structure and coherence. • A basic use of technical language and vocabulary with a poor grasp of spelling, punctuation and grammar. 	[1]–[4]

Band	AO2 Performance Descriptors	Marks
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comprehensive and coherent response demonstrating an excellent attempt at critical analysis. • An excellent attempt to evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief. • An excellent attempt using evidence, reasoning and scholarship to construct well informed and balanced arguments. • An excellent attempt at providing personal insight and independent thought. • A sophisticated answer with a clear and coherent structure. • An extensive range of technical language and vocabulary with accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar. 	[25]–[30]
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A very good response demonstrating a very good attempt at critical analysis. • A very good attempt to evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief. • A very good attempt using evidence, reasoning and scholarship to construct well informed and balanced arguments. • A very good attempt at providing personal insight and independent thought. • A mature answer with a mainly clear and coherent structure. • A very good use of technical language and vocabulary with a mainly accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar. 	[19]–[24]
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reasonable response demonstrating a good attempt at critical analysis. • A good attempt to evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief. • A good attempt using evidence, reasoning and scholarship to construct well informed and balanced arguments. • A good attempt at providing personal insight and independent thought. • A reasonably mature answer with some evidence of structure and coherence. • A good use of technical language and vocabulary with a reasonably accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar. 	[13]–[18]
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A limited response demonstrating a modest attempt at critical analysis. • A limited attempt to evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief. • A limited attempt using evidence, reasoning and scholarship to construct well informed and balanced arguments. • A limited attempt at providing personal insight and independent thought. • A limited answer with limited evidence of structure and coherence. • A limited use of technical language and vocabulary with a limited command of spelling, punctuation and grammar. 	[7]–[12]
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A basic response demonstrating little attempt at critical analysis. • A basic attempt to evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief. • A basic attempt using evidence, reasoning and scholarship to construct well informed and balanced arguments. • A basic attempt at providing personal insight and independent thought. • A basic answer with basic structure and coherence. • A basic use of technical language and vocabulary with a poor grasp of spelling, punctuation and grammar. 	[1]–[6]

Section A

AVAILABLE
MARKS

Answer **two** questions from this section

1 (a) In what ways can Narrative Criticism be used to understand Luke's Gospel?

Answers may include:

- Exploration of Narrative Criticism as a text centred approach – looking at the text rather than seeking to discover the historical author or readers.
- It helps understanding by allowing interpretation of the Gospels as a process. It complements the doctrine of inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It allows the Gospels to be helpful in addressing modern ethical situations and dilemmas. It aids understanding.
- Reflection on the views of Hans Frei who believed the Gospels should be read as complete narratives as that is how they were intended to be read hence as a text centred approach.
- Consideration of the move away from viewing the Gospels as historical and towards a more literary approach.
- Exploration of implied and real author and reader. The implied author gives the narrative its point of view.
- Discussion of the methodology of Narrative Criticism such as plot, characters, narrative pattern, setting, characterisation, symbolism, point of view in adding to understanding of Luke's Gospel with supporting exemplification, where appropriate, from the text.
- Consideration of the subjective nature of Narrative Criticism as the reader must engage with the text.
- Mention of scholars associated with the Narrative critical approach such as Rhoades and Mitchie, Culpepper, Kingsbury.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO1)

[20]

- (b) “The fundamental weakness of Narrative Criticism is its focus on the text itself at the expense of other important considerations.”
Consider critically this view.

Answers may include:

- Consideration of Narrative Criticism which looks at the overall text and its impact on the life of the reader.
- Discussion of understanding the text in its final form. The meaning of the text is not tied to the original historical community, but arises from the relationship of the reader to the text which may be seen as a weakness.
- It is a text centred approach which allows the text to be interpreted as a whole and as a process it is not concerned with historical issues.
- It contributes to a holistic understanding of the Gospels rather than breaking the text into individual units as in the work of Form critics.
- It does not rely on a hypothesis such as Streeter’s four-source theory as in the case of Source Criticism.
- It recognises that the Evangelists had literary skills.
- Possible counterclaim exploring the limitations of narrative criticism as an approach such as the belief by some scholars that it is wrong to apply modern literary techniques to ancient texts. The Gospel is a unique genre and cannot be judged as fiction. History is disregarded in Narrative Criticism. It is a subjective process.
- Consideration of how other biblical critical techniques which focus on the historical nature of the Gospels such as Source, Form and Redaction Criticism have also made valuable contributions to understanding of the Gospels.
- Source Criticism established the sources the Evangelists used when writing. Form Criticism brought about an understanding of the oral period and the issues facing the early Church. Redaction Criticism brought about an awareness of the Evangelists as theologians. All of which have made valuable contributions to understanding the Gospels.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO2)

[30]

50

AVAILABLE
MARKS

2 (a) Explain how the title Son of God should be understood.

AVAILABLE
MARKS

Answers may include:

- Exploration of the title Son of God as a title which displays both humanity and divinity.
- Discussion of the Jewish background to the title where sons of God applied to angels, kings, righteous people and the nation of Israel, therefore not exclusively divine as a title.
- Consideration of the New Testament use of the title where Son of God is used by God at both the Baptism and Transfiguration to refer to Jesus as his divinely appointed son.
- Reflection on development of the title from not denoting divinity yet developing to mean the literal Son of God. In the early Church, it came to imply shared divinity with God and was established in the Nicene Creed.
- Discussion of Christology and the use of the title by the Synoptic evangelists in relation to their own Christological approach such as:
- Matthew uses the title to connect Jesus to being a descendant of King David in his genealogy. Mark also refers to the title in his introduction (1:1). The Messianic Secret motif in Mark.
- It connects with Matthew's overall theology. Fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies.
- Luke presents Jesus as the Messiah connected to Son of God.
- Possible mention of the views of Aquinas, Augustine or Irenaeus in relation to the title.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO1)

[20]

- (b) “The command of Jesus to ‘love your enemies’ has always been unattainable and continues to have no relevance today.”
Critically evaluate this claim.

Answers may include:

- Exploration of the view that the command to love was always unattainable with possible note of the views of Aquinas, Calvin, Schweitzer, Nietzsche.
- Discussion of the view that to some extent Jesus’ teaching on love of enemies has no relevance for today as it is often impossible to love without limits and follow this teaching especially when an individual/group has done wrong and inflicted great damage or harm on an individual or community.
- Consideration of Jesus’ teaching on revenge and it’s implications for today. The question of forgiveness over revenge and retribution. Is compassion limited?
- Discussion of the issue of revenge in relation to capital punishment. The death penalty is still legal and practiced in several countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran. Is it right to take life from those who have taken life?
- Consideration of the idea of retribution – ‘an eye for an eye’; for some people the only way to get closure is through revenge and for some people retribution is the only way to attain punishment. The rise in honour killings/punishments particularly in India.
- Exploration of the concept of collective wrong and how society communally may blame and take revenge for an act committed by an enemy as in the case of 9/11 and the ensuing war on terror. The need for retaliation to achieve exoneration. The rise of nationalism and patriotism including instances of racism or islamophobia. An increase in stereotyping and cultural appropriation has made the greatest commandment more challenging.
- Consideration of the teaching of forgiveness without limits and how this is not relevant today for some who find it impossible to forgive – Winnie Johnson (mother of Moors Murder victim).
- Possible counterclaim that Jesus’ teachings on love of enemies is more relevant now than ever. The concepts of forgiveness and mercy are still relevant and necessary in modern society and therefore is relevant.
- Discussion of examples of those who have lived up to Jesus’ teachings on love of enemies past and present showing it is attainable such as Pope John Paul II who forgave his assassin or Gordon Wilson who forgave his daughter’s killers.
- Consideration of how ‘love your enemies’ assisted healing in a divided society, e.g. the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa.
- Examination of the psychological perspective that forgiveness has positive mental health and wellbeing benefits.
- Reflection on the work of organisations such as Reflex who practice restorative practice and compassion for those who have done wrong.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO2)

[30]

50

AVAILABLE
MARKS

- 3 (a) Identify and consider the theological features found only in Luke's account of the crucifixion, death and burial of Jesus (Luke 23:26–56).

AVAILABLE
MARKS

Answers may include:

- Discussion of Luke's unique theological features such as:
- Luke's crucifixion, death and burial narrative reflects his key theological feature of everything being in accordance with God's plan. This explains the crucifixion and death of Jesus especially to the early Church. The denial of Judas and Peter's betrayal were all part of God's plan.
- Luke presents the innocence of Jesus as a feature of his crucifixion and death. The women mourn Jesus. The repentant thief and the Centurion declare Jesus to be innocent.
- Luke's apologetic purpose carried through to the crucifixion and death where the Roman authority's role in the death of Jesus is reduced.
- Luke presents Jesus as a compassionate martyr. He comforts the women on his way to the cross and speaks to the repentant thief while his suffering is internalised. Luke's presentation is delicate in comparison to the other synoptics, e.g. Jesus' words from the cross are different in the other Synoptics as Luke's cry is one of prayer and not abandonment to reflect a more serene picture.
- Luke links the crucifixion to secular history. Luke's audience of Gentiles living in a Roman ruled world would have appreciated the connection Luke made between Christianity and the Roman Empire.
- Luke is audience specific, e.g. explaining burial rites such as preparation day for his Gentile audience.
- Possible comparison to other synoptic writers such as Luke does not have a theology of the cross (theologia crucis) as being Gentile he does not see Jesus' death as a sacrifice while Mark sees Jesus' death as a ransom.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO1)

[20]

(b) “Nothing is more important than the crucifixion and death of Jesus in the Christian faith.”

How far do you agree with this view?

Answers may include:

- The suffering and death of Jesus is central to Christian belief and faith.
- Reflection on the belief that the death of Jesus is an essential part of the Christian story as without the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross the Christian theology is not valid. The full redemptive meaning of the crucifixion is a vital component of Christian belief.
- Reflection on Jesus’ death as a sacrifice or ransom – Jesus died on the cross to save humanity from sin.
- Consideration that the passion narratives are the earliest written oral material in the Gospels, therefore the crucifixion of Jesus was such an important part of Christian belief that it was the first to be recorded. The views of Dibelius that the story of the crucifixion was so important it became a fixed narrative at a very early stage in early Church history.
- Exploration of the views of some scholars that Mark’s Gospel is a passion narrative with an extended introduction. Mark’s concentration on the theme of suffering. Mark’s theology of the cross.
- Reflection on the difficulty faced by the early Church over the death of Jesus as a criminal and how the evangelists tried to reconcile this fact with ongoing theological concerns. They wanted to explain why Jesus had to die in such a horrific way despite the fact he was the Messiah and God’s son.
- Reflection on the symbol of the cross used in Christianity.
- Possible counter argument that the resurrection of Jesus is the most important part of Christian belief – ‘he is risen’ is the central message of the Gospels. According to St. Paul without the resurrection the Christian faith would be invalid, therefore considered the most important part of the Christian faith by the early Church.
- Consideration of other important elements such as the miracles or the birth of Jesus as more important events in the Christian faith.
- Exploration of the subjective nature of religious experience and so what one believes to be central to their faith experience may vary from person to person, therefore the entirety of Jesus’ life and the events therein are central to religious belief.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO2)

[30]

Section A

**AVAILABLE
MARKS**

50

100

Synoptic Bands

Total Marks: [20]

Band	AO1 Performance Descriptors	Marks
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An excellent attempt at analysis with a full and highly informed response to the question. • Demonstrates comprehensive understanding and accurate knowledge of the themes considering the influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies. • A very high degree of relevant evidence, scholarship and exemplification with particular reference to at least one other unit of study. • A sophisticated answer with a clear and coherent structure. • An extensive range of technical language and vocabulary with accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar. 	[17]–[20]
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A very good attempt at analysis with a well informed response to the question. • Demonstrates a high degree of understanding and almost totally accurate knowledge of the themes considering the influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies. • A very good range of relevant evidence, scholarship and exemplification with particular reference to at least one other unit of study. • A mature answer with a mainly clear and coherent structure. • A very good use of technical language and vocabulary with a mainly accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar. 	[13]–[16]
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A good attempt at analysis with a reasonably well informed response to the question. • Demonstrates a good understanding and mainly accurate knowledge of the themes considering the influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies. • A good range of relevant evidence, scholarship and exemplification with particular reference to at least one other unit of study. • A reasonably mature answer with some evidence of structure and coherence. • A good use of technical language and vocabulary with a reasonably accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar. 	[9]–[12]
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A limited attempt at analysis with a limited response to the question. • Demonstrates a limited understanding and limited knowledge of the themes considering the influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies. • A limited range of relevant evidence, scholarship and exemplification with particular reference to at least one other unit of study. • A limited answer with limited evidence of structure and coherence. • A limited use of technical language and vocabulary with a limited command of spelling, punctuation and grammar. 	[5]–[8]
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A basic attempt at analysis with a basic response to the question. • Demonstrates a basic understanding and basic knowledge of the themes considering the influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies. • A basic range of evidence, scholarship and exemplification with particular reference to at least one other unit of study. • A basic answer with basic structure and coherence. • A basic use of technical language and vocabulary with a poor grasp of spelling, punctuation and grammar. 	[1]–[4]

Candidates must refer to at least one other unit of study in their AO1 response to access Bands 4–5.

Band	AO2 Performance Descriptors	Marks
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comprehensive and coherent response demonstrating an excellent attempt at critical analysis in relation to other aspects of human experience. • An excellent attempt to evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief. • An excellent attempt using evidence, reasoning and scholarship to construct well informed and balanced arguments. • An excellent attempt at providing personal insight and independent thought. • A sophisticated answer with a clear and coherent structure. • An extensive range of technical language and vocabulary with accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar. 	[25]–[30]
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A very good response demonstrating a very good attempt at critical analysis in relation to other aspects of human experience. • A very good attempt to evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief. • A very good attempt using evidence, reasoning and scholarship to construct well informed and balanced arguments. • A very good attempt at providing personal insight and independent thought. • A mature answer with a mainly clear and coherent structure. • A very good use of technical language and vocabulary with a mainly accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar. 	[19]–[24]
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reasonable response demonstrating a good attempt at critical analysis in relation to other aspects of human experience. • A good attempt to evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief. • A good attempt using evidence, reasoning and scholarship to construct well informed and balanced arguments. • A good attempt at providing personal insight and independent thought. • A reasonably mature answer with some evidence of structure and coherence. • A good use of technical language and vocabulary with a reasonably accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar. 	[13]–[18]
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A limited response demonstrating a modest attempt at critical analysis which struggles to relate to other aspects of human experience. • A limited attempt to evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief. • A limited attempt using evidence, reasoning and scholarship to construct well informed and balanced arguments. • A limited attempt at providing personal insight and independent thought. • A limited answer with limited evidence of structure and coherence. • A limited use of technical language and vocabulary with a limited command of spelling, punctuation and grammar. 	[7]–[12]
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A basic response demonstrating little attempt at critical analysis which fails to relate to other aspects of human experience. • A basic attempt to evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief. • A basic attempt using evidence, reasoning and scholarship to construct well informed and balanced arguments. • A basic attempt at providing personal insight and independent thought. • A basic answer with basic structure and coherence. • A basic use of technical language and vocabulary with a poor grasp of spelling, punctuation and grammar. 	[1]–[6]

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

Section B

AVAILABLE
MARKS

Synoptic Assessment

Theme: Religious Texts, Authority and Interpretation

You **must** answer this question.

- 4 (a) “Religious texts provide an explanation for the problem of suffering.”
With reference to **one** example, present a case for this statement. You must support your answer with reference to at least **one** other unit of study.

Answers may include:

- Reference to one example drawn from non-taught course material.
- Presentation for the case that religious texts explain the problem of suffering.
- Understanding of what religious texts teach about the problem of evil and suffering - The Bible teaches it is part of God’s plan, Genesis 3, joining with Christ’s suffering on the Cross, freewill, individual conscience. Hinduism teaches suffering is because of one’s own individual action, The Bhagavad Gita encourages Hindu’s to believe that everything is part of an eternal cycle. The Vedas explain evil as the absence of good. Islam teaches the concept of Fitrah, which is an inner sense of right and wrong. The Qur’an teaches Muslims should treat others with mercy and make sure that justice is done if they see any wrongdoing; acceptance of Allah’s will.
- Definition of a religious text with possible examples from various world religions – Old Testament/Torah in Judaism, Bible in Christianity, Qur’an in Islam.
- Discussion of the various interpretations of religious texts and how this can influence what one can learn from a text, literal and spiritual truths, fundamental and liberal interpretations, infallibility and change and development.
- Possible acknowledgement of the view that religious texts may not have fully resolved the problem of evil and suffering. A reliance on blind faith is characteristic of God’s plan for humanity in some religious texts as a solution to the problem of suffering.
- Consideration of the importance of religious texts, their use in worship and practice, historical documents containing information about leaders and their significant teachings and instructions, moral and ethical guidance and the different emphasis placed on religious texts in various religions and within denominations.
- Consideration of subjective interpretation of texts.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

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

(AO1)

[20]

(b) With reference to other aspects of human experience, critically assess the view that suffering is the greatest test of faith for all religious believers.

Answers may include:

- Candidates must refer to other aspects of human experience.
- Agreement with the view that suffering can be a challenging issue for many religious believers both past and present – possible historical and/or contemporary examples to clarify this argument.
- Discussion of the problem of why innocent people suffer. The challenge of belief in a God who would allow natural disasters or genocide.
- Exploration of the views of theologians and philosophers on the challenges to faith associated with the concept of evil and suffering, such as it appears to be inconsistent with the existence of an omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent God.
- The challenges presented by unquestioning commitment to absolute trust and confidence in God; to belief in life after death.
- The various tests of faith faced by Abraham, considered to be the Knight of Faith.
- Discussion of the theodicies to explain the mystery of evil and suffering, e.g. Augustine, Irenaeus.
- Consideration of psychological suffering – belief in God can help religious believers to cope with some of their most basic fears. Death is not the end and suffering is not in vain. Suffering can bring a new perspective to life issues.
- Reflection on how various religious believers respond to suffering such as in Christianity, those who suffer are to be helped through positive action and prayer. In Islam, Muslims see an overall purpose in suffering such as it being a test or retribution for a wrongdoing. Some see suffering as a blessing with a reward in the afterlife. Hindus believe in ahimsa that all should show kindness and act with non-violence towards all living things.
- Possible counter opinion that suffering is not a challenge to religious belief as it is part of God’s plan and therefore beyond human understanding. For people of religious faith, it needs no explanation.
- Discussion of the views of psychologists like Freud who believed religion was “mass-delusion” that offered the certainty of contentment and protection from suffering.
- Consideration of the mystery of suffering as an issue that does not need to be understood or solved but is part of the natural cycle of life.
- References to historical and/or contemporaneous examples to support claims.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

Candidates must engage with other aspects of human experience to access

Bands 3–5

(AO2)

[30]

Section B

Total

**AVAILABLE
MARKS**

50

50

150