



Rewarding Learning

**ADVANCED
General Certificate of Education
2025**

Religious Studies

Assessment Unit A2 3

assessing

Themes in the Old Testament

[ARE31]

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) With reference to **one** example from the texts studied, examine the concept of *herem*.

Answers may include:

- Discussion of how the term *herem*: is especially relevant to the narratives related to Israel's conquest of the land as described and explained in Deuteronomy and Joshua; constitutes a theologically important, particularly intense dimension of violence in the brutal depiction of invasion and war.
- Examination of how the concept of *herem* originates in God's command for Israel to totally destroy/annihilate a defeated enemy, including even women, children, livestock and all other forms of captured plunder, under certain circumstances.
- Observe the different stipulations associated with *herem* depending on whether a defeated nation is distant or nearby: if a more distant city surrenders when Israel makes an offer of peace, all its inhabitants are to be subject to forced labour, but if it refuses to make peace, when it is defeated, all the men are to be executed, while the women, children, livestock and everything else captured can be taken as plunder (Deuteronomy 20:10–15); however, in cities conquered within what is to become the land of Israel, nothing is to be left alive in order to preserve the religious distinctiveness of Israel (Deuteronomy 20:16–18).
- Reference to one specific example of *herem*, with appropriate knowledge, understanding and explanation (possibly drawn from Joshua, chapters 6–11, relating to Jericho, Ai, Hazor); the case of how *herem* was not adhered to in 1st Samuel 15.
- Reflection on how the concept of *herem* problematically links raw military violence with the will of God: in this linkage, the will of God is seen to justify, authorize and legitimate acts of extermination.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO1)

[20]

- (b) “God’s permission for ancient Israel to use excessive violence has been followed more in every age than God’s command to show compassion.” Critically assess this claim.

Answers may include:

- Recognition: that the Bible is steeped in violence, with exemplification and possible explanation for aspects of this; but that it also contains a firm focus on compassion, as indicated by the widows, orphans, foreigners formula; that there is therefore a pronounced tension in the Bible, which can be traced to a struggle within the heart of God (Hosea 11:1–11), and is manifested in human actions throughout history as well as in the contemporary world.
- Discussion of the significance of the figure of Jesus specifically and the New Testament more generally for underlining the necessity/centrality of compassion, pointing to how Christianity and Islam should be religions of peace; an assessment of how religious idealism may encounter harsh reality, deeming recourse to violence a viable and – for some – necessary option.
- Consideration of how the early church discouraged members from joining the Roman legions because they would have to obey orders to kill, in contravention of God’s commandments; but noting that following the Emperor Constantine’s conversion to Christianity, members of the Roman legions were required to be Christians; how this laid the foundation for the legitimation of state violence and undermined the idea of the church as an alternative community committed to compassion and non-violence.
- Reference to examples of where excessive and systemic violence has been deployed, often justified by biblical quotations, including the Crusades, the slave trade, and ethnic cleansing in the wake of colonial expansion/exploitation; the religious underpinnings of Jihad leading in some instances to Islamic extremism; the Israeli war in Gaza; but note also attempts to limit violence in Just War Theory, the U.N. Charter and the ICJ.
- Examination, by way of contrast, of how compassion has been emphasized and institutionalized in: the Christian origins of hospitals continuing in the NHS and Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders; the concept of sanctuary finding new form in the City of Sanctuary charity; movements of abolition and emancipation being perpetuated in the Civil Rights Movement and International Justice Mission; organizations like Oxfam, Christian Aid, Trócaire, Tearfund.
- Reflection on and evaluation of how major world religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam have the resources in their foundational texts, theologies and traditions to significantly contribute to furthering compassion, peace and human flourishing, but instead sometimes/often foster violence, war and division; possible reasons for this, including hermeneutics.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO2)

[30]

50

AVAILABLE
MARKS

- 2 (a) Present a case for how **one** of Jeremiah's private poems is a personal lament.

AVAILABLE
MARKS

Answers may include:

- Outline that while as a prophet Jeremiah engages forcefully and confidently with the authorities in public, he also has the tendency to question, grieve, and doubt when he is alone: these qualities come to the fore in the private poems and form the basis for them being viewed as conforming to the lament genre.
- Identify and introduce the private poem to be considered from Jeremiah 12:1–6, 15:10–21, 17:14–18, 20:7–13, 20:14–18, including understanding of its background, theme, content, development and conclusion.
- Examination of how the poem displays the characteristics of a lament, including reference to Psalm 30 as a classic example/template, and knowledge of key elements such as the plea (consisting of an address to God and a complaint), the petition, the motivations, and the answer that comes back from God.
- Discussion of how the private poems may be interpreted in two ways: as personal articulations of faith when the prophet feels that his assignment from God is more than he can bear; or as lamentations, written in a first-person voice, which can be used to express the communal grief of Judah at its suffering and dismay confronted with historical threat.
- Consideration of how the private poems became popularly known as the Lamentations of Jeremiah, and in this way contributed to the tradition that Jeremiah was the author of the Book of Lamentations.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO1)

[20]

(b) “The Book of Jeremiah achieves a perfect balance between judgement and hope.”

With reference to the texts studied, consider critically this view.

Answers may include:

- Exploration of the proposition that at its original/historic core the Book of Jeremiah is primarily/exclusively tilted towards judgment: well-remembered powerful oracles indict Jerusalem for its disobedience of God’s Torah/Law, justifying an extreme punishment, commensurate with the depth of wrongdoing; the cumulative force of the oracles is to anticipate the destruction of Jerusalem in an enemy attack that is presented as the will of God, who ultimately will not be disobeyed or mocked.
- Discussion of the content of the most significant oracles in support of the primacy of judgment view, including the condemnation of the Temple as a key feature of the Davidic Covenant (Jeremiah 7:1–19), and how God is implacably opposed to the Davidic dynasty (Jeremiah 21:1–14), on account of its abandonment of social justice (Jeremiah 22:13–17).
- Reference to Jeremiah 4:23–28 in particular for the way it envisages the complete and utter finality of the destructive judgment which is coming for Judah: it is comparable to the undoing/reversal of the order of creation as the land of promise is returned to primal chaos.
- Consideration of the language/imagery/promises of hope/renewal in the Book of Jeremiah, including how: it will be like a new exodus (Jeremiah 31:1–6); focused on the most vulnerable (Jeremiah 31:8–14); constituted by the replacement of uprooting and tearing down with building and planting (Jeremiah 31:28), underpinned by the divine guarantee that Jerusalem will never again be demolished (Jeremiah 31:40) – giving the impression that the future will be better and more stable than the past.
- Reflect that God will break the cycle of sin and punishment through the New Covenant: it will be better than the old because the law will be written in the hearts and minds of the people, and everyone from least to greatest will know the ways of the Lord without being taught (Jeremiah 31:31–34); how this further suggests that hope ultimately takes primacy over judgment.
- Acknowledge that the Book of Jeremiah fits the classic prophetic pattern of judgment being followed by hope; that in this pattern the original vision of unremitting doom/judgment is later redacted to include hope/renewal; that therefore it may be argued that something approximating a perfect balance between judgment and hope is struck.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO2)

[30]

50

AVAILABLE
MARKS

- 3 (a) Outline the importance of what is said in the passage about the Shepherds of Israel (Ezekiel 34:1–31).

AVAILABLE
MARKS

Answers may include:

- Recognition that: when the Bible uses the term “shepherds” in a context such as this, it is referring to kings/princes/leaders/a politically influential grouping; this designation of “shepherds” was commonly understood across the Ancient Near East.
- Discussion of how the extended prophetic analysis of the “Shepherds of Israel” in Ezekiel 34:1–31 attributes an exceptionally high level of blame for the punishment of exile to the ruling elite in Israel for its selfish, unjust policies, with exemplification of these (Ezekiel 34:1–6); if, as seems likely/possible, the origin of this passage is exilic/post-exilic then it views the danger from these policies as having on-going importance.
- Exploration of the idea that if the “shepherds” continue in the dereliction of their duty to seek the welfare of the people (Ezekiel 34:7–16), and even act in ways that make life more difficult and insecure (Ezekiel 34:17–19), then this will lead to further judgment (Ezekiel 34:20–22).
- Consideration of how God will intervene directly to address this situation by removing the “shepherds” in order to replace them with a representative of the Davidic line: in this arrangement, God will exercise authority through a David prince (Ezekiel 34:23–24).
- Reference how Ezekiel, although primarily focused on priestly/cultic/purity aspects of life, was also concerned about the importance of social justice/good governance as the way to establishing peace and security for the people, as well as flourishing for the land (Ezekiel 34:25–31).

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO1)

[20]

- (b) “The Book of Ezekiel offers a positive message to every age, especially through the theme of renewal.”
With reference to the texts studied, how far do you agree with this claim?

Answers may include:

- Acknowledgement that the second half of the Book of Ezekiel consists of a rich variety of images of renewal, expressed in language which is accessible and attractive to every age; however, it may be argued that the intense judgment/trauma/suffering which precede the positive message undermine the view that renewal is the main theme.
- Exploration of how: the vision of the new heart (Ezekiel 36:16–32), and the vision of the dry bones coming to life (Ezekiel 37:1–28) are literary devices which, in addition to their original meaning, can also be appropriated by later generations in both religious and secular perspective, in both instances speaking of a fresh start/new beginning.
- Consideration of how: the vision of a renewed creation (Ezekiel 47:1–12) may offer a particularly positive message of encouragement in the modern era, when environmental/ecological issues are of such importance and the dangers of climate change/chaos are in such sharp focus; renewal is emphasized so strongly and predominates the ending of the book of Ezekiel so much that it may be taken as its main theme.
- Discussion of how: purity, as conceived in the biblical priestly tradition, is the main theme of the Book of Ezekiel; renewal is governed by this theme, understood as having the temple, with its cultic system, at its centre; that this way of thinking is alien even to many people of faith, and therefore does not offer a positive message.
- Examination of how, with a focus on the language of Ezekiel 16:1–63, and especially Ezekiel 23:5–8, 11–20, the extreme – and, it may be posited, obscene – way Ezekiel articulates some of his oracles means that overall the positive aspects of his message are called into question.
- Reference how: while prophets were known to act and speak erratically, Ezekiel, with his disordered personality, was in a league of his own when it came to his bizarre behaviour, experiences and visions; these, rather than any positive message of renewal, have become the most important element in the Book of Ezekiel for some, including psychiatrists and visionary poets.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO2)

[30]

50

Section A

100

**AVAILABLE
MARKS**

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: Leadership, Text and Alienation

You **must** answer this question

- 4 (a) Clarify **one** way in which sin can affect relationships.
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.
- Observation that in the theological tradition as it developed in Western Christianity, sin and guilt became the central issue/problem to be addressed/solved: sin represented a primal/existential rupture in the relationship between God and humanity, requiring the sacrificial/atoning death of Jesus to bring salvation/the possibility of the restoration of relationship.
- Exploration of how Augustine of Hippo first articulated this understanding, with reference to its pronounced influence on key figures in the Protestant Reformation: Martin Luther, with his definition of the human person as *homo incurvatus in se*, thus alienated from her/his true self; John Calvin, for whom the doctrine of “total depravity” underlined humanity’s separation from God through sin.
- Discussion of other possible concepts of sin in a wider religious/cultural perspective, including as shirk, deficit, failure, mistake, recalcitrance, rebellion, moral infraction/violation, karma, with exemplification of the effect on relationships.
- Consideration of Liberation Theology, with its proposal for construing sin as structural, including how this approach, focused on the idea of the preferential option for the poor, has implications for socio-economic as well as ecclesiological relationships.
- Reflection on how different faith traditions provide a variety of methods for restoring right relationship with God and/or neighbour, including confession, incubation, absolution, declaration of pardon, penance, anointing, extreme unction, oil of the sick, restitution/reparation, sharing the peace, rituals/sacrament of reconciliation, special/specific offerings.
- How sin ruptures relationships with self, fellow human beings, God and the natural world including relationships with animals.

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) “Without careful interpretation, religious texts hinder ethical decision making.”

To what extent do you agree with this view? You must refer to other aspects of human experience in your answer.

Answers may include:

- Clear engagement with other aspects of human experience, citing relevant historical and/or contemporary examples.
- Consideration of the proposition that as ancient religious texts derive from very different historical, social, cultural, knowledge based contexts, they should be treated with some caution in relation to modern ethics: in some instances, issues were understood in terms of purity/uncleanness, that have no reference point today and may be regarded as superstition, rather than ethics.
- Exploration of how religious texts have been used as the justification for ethically unacceptable practices such as slavery, racism/apartheid, ethnic cleansing, the subordination of women, underlining the need for careful interpretation.
- Examination of the need for a grasp of the importance of hermeneutics: evidenced by the fact that the Bible also provides the basis for opposing slavery, racism/apartheid, ethnic cleansing, the subordination of women, when guiding/underpinning principles, deduced from the text, are used to create a hermeneutical lens, rather than the application of a literalist/fundamentalist reading, e.g. the nature of God as inherently loving, the example of how Jesus treated the excluded, Paul’s teaching that Christ dispenses with the hierarchies of the world (Jew/Gentile, male/female, slave/free).
- Reflection on how the key issue in this debate is often not the authority of Scripture, but the interpretation of Scripture: different people/groups can read the same religious texts and can genuinely reach different ethical conclusions and positions.
- Alternatively, it may be argued that there are examples of something close to ethical absolutes in religious texts: the sanctity of life; treating widows, orphans, resident aliens with dignity (effective in the Ancient Near East since the time of Hammurabi’s Code); variations of the golden rule, found in Confucianism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism.
- Discussion of how the debate: has complexities, which cannot be reduced to simplistic formulations on any side; must take into account advances in human knowledge; would be enhanced by a shared/agreed/common focus on human well-being and the protection of the planet.

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