



Rewarding Learning

ADVANCED
General Certificate of Education
2025

Religious Studies

Assessment Unit A2 8

assessing

Themes in the Philosophy of Religion

[ARE81]

THURSDAY 19 JUNE, 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 does Wittgenstein's theory of 'language games' affect how religious language is understood?

Answers may include:

- An exploration of the ways in which Wittgenstein's theory of language games affects how religious language is understood.
- An identification and consideration of Wittgenstein's theory of language games as it applies to religious language.
- An exploration of Wittgenstein's theory of language games, language as having meaning only as a result of the rules of the game being played.
- An exploration of the context of language as key to its meaning, religious language as having a unique context.
- An exploration of language as serving a unique function.
- Reference to categories of games each with their own unique rules and language as identified by Wittgenstein.
- An explanation of key concepts such as forms of life, rules, games.
- Reference to the writings of Wittgenstein such as *Philosophical Investigations*.
- An exploration of analogies used by Wittgenstein.
- Reference to Wittgenstein's movement away from Logical Positivism.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO1)

[20]

(b) Critically assess the claim that in the modern secular age, all religious language continues to have meaning and relevance.

AVAILABLE
MARKS

Answers may include:

- A critical assessment of the claim that religious language is meaningful and relevant in the modern secular age.
- An exploration of the views of Logical Positivism concerning the meaningless nature of religious language.
- Reference to the views of selected thinkers such as Ayer, Flew, Russell and Wittgenstein.
- Atheism's rejection of religious language as non-empirical and, therefore valueless.
- An exploration of the role of the Vienna Circle.
- An exploration of the criteria used to assess the worth or otherwise of language and religious language in particular.
- Counter challenges to the stated claim, theism's assertion of the profound value of religious language.
- Reference to religious language as recorded within sacred texts, as providing eternal and enduring truths.
- Reference to scholarly support for the meaningfulness of religious language, such as DZ Phillips, Aquinas, Tillich and/or Macquarrie.
- Reference to relevant historical and/or contemporary religious statements.
- A critique of the tenets of Logical Positivism as being reductionist, leading to the rejection of much human testimony, including historical statements.
- An exploration of atheism's rejection of any metaphysical reality.
- Clarification of the term 'modern secular age', is society moving towards a post secular age?
- While the current age appears more secular and pluralistic, religious belief and practice remain strong and thus, religious language continues to be meaningful and relevant.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO2)

[30]

50

2 (a) Explain Hick's replica theory.

AVAILABLE
MARKS

Answers may include:

- An explanation of Hick's Replica/Recreation Theory.
- Reference to the John Smith thought experiment and relevance to the concept of life after death.
- An exploration of the issue of post-mortem identity and continuity.
- Hick's Replica Theory as supporting the possibility of bodily resurrection.
- Reference to the links between Pauline teaching concerning bodily resurrection and Hick's Replica Theory.
- An exploration of Hick's concept of a Replica World.
- Reference to the writings of Hick such as Philosophy of Religion, Faith and Knowledge.
- Reference to Hick's rejection of dualism and support for materialism.
- Reference to hard materialism's rejection of Hick's Replica Theory.
- A critique of Hick's Replica Theory, is a replica identical to an original?

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO1)

[20]

(b) “The evidence to support the concept of life after death is no longer convincing.”

How far do you agree with this view?

Answers may include:

- An evaluation of the evidence used to support the concept of life after death.
- A brief delineation of evidence to support life after death and analysis as to the veracity of such evidence.
- Support for the stated claim, hard materialism’s rejection of any evidence in support of life after death.
- An exploration of the views of selected schools of thought such as Logical Positivists and/or Empiricists.
- Reference to the lack of empirical evidence to support post-mortem existence.
- Reference to the philosophical problems associated with life after death as insurmountable, e.g. the continuity problem and/or the identity issue.
- Reference to changing attitudes regarding acceptance of the concept of life after death.
- Counterchallenges to the stated claim, evidence of life after death as recorded in sacred texts as holding permanent truth.
- An exploration of the support of Biblical literalists, scripture as the inerrant Word of God.
- Reference to support for the concept of life after death across multiple faith traditions.
- An analysis of the views of selected Dualists, as providing convincing support for the concept of life after death.
- Reference to the Platonic idea that all knowledge is the product of memories of the World of Forms.
- Reference to the concept of eschatological verification of life after death.
- An analysis of near-death experiences and the testimony of mediums.
- An analysis of the teachings of selected dualists as to whether these teachings are convincing.
- Reference to Pascal’s Wager, the benefits of belief even when evidence is non-compelling.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO2)

[30]

50

AVAILABLE
MARKS

- 3 (a) “That humans are innately moral is evidence of the existence of God.”
With particular reference to Aquinas’ moral argument, present a case for this statement.

Answers may include:

- A presentation of the case in support of the statement provided, with particular reference to Aquinas’ moral argument.
- An exploration of Aquinas’ moral argument as proving evidence for the existence of God.
- Reference to Aquinas’ teaching concerning gradation of what is good, noble and true and how this relates to human morality and the existence of God.
- An exploration of Aquinas’ 4th Way as recorded in Summa Theologica.
- Reference to support for Aquinas’ argument by subsequent scholars such as Kant, Newman, William Lane Craig and/or HP Owens.
- Reference to the origins of Aquinas’ moral argument in the work of Plato and/or Aristotle.
- Biblical agreement as humanity is ‘made in God’s image’.
- Clarification of the term ‘innately moral’.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO1)

[20]

AVAILABLE
MARKS

(b) “Morality has purpose and relevance without God and religion.”
Critically evaluate this view.

Answers may include:

- A critical evaluation of the claim that morality has purpose and relevance without God and religion.
- Support for this claim in an increasingly secular age, morality has/must become uncoupled from God and religion.
- An exploration of the purpose of morality, as a social mechanism and/or pathway towards eschatological goals.
- An exploration of the purpose and relevance of morality both for the individual and society.
- An exploration of the sources of morality, is morality rooted in the Divine or the product of evolution and/or social conditioning?
- An exploration of the views of Secular Humanism, the source of morality is human not Divine.
- Reference to the views of relevant scholars such as Freud, Dawkins, Craig, Rachels, Harris, Singer.
- Reference to ethical guidelines as recorded in one or more Humanist Manifestos.
- An exploration of Nietzsche’s claim that God is dead and the implication of such a claim.
- An exploration of atheistic Existentialist support for this statement, there are no objective Divine truths, humanity is free to shape its own morality.
- Challenges to this view by theism, morality as requiring a moral law giver.
- Reference to specific moral teachings as recorded in sacred texts as providing an essential moral framework.
- Reference to the particular views of Alain de Botton.
- Reference to Kant’s Categorical Imperative, humans are driven by sense of duty.
- Reference to Newman’s views concerning the role of conscience.
- Reference to relevant writings such as Dostoyevsky’s The Brothers Karamazov and/or Sartre’s Being and Nothingness.

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: Faith, Freedom and Atheism

You **must** answer this question.

- 4 (a) “Humans must shape their own destiny in a meaningless universe.”
Present a case for this statement. You must support your answer with reference to at least **one** other unit of study.

Answers may include:

- A presentation of the case in support of the statement that humans must shape their own destiny in a meaningless universe drawn from non-taught course material.
- Support for this statement in the teachings of Atheistic Existentialism – man is alone and abandoned in an Absurd World, with no other future than that which he forges for himself.
- An exploration as to what constitutes a meaningless universe.
- Reference to the distinction between ‘being pour soi’ and ‘being ensoi’.
- An exploration of the distinction between the ideas of existence preceding essence and essence preceding existence.
- An exploration of the views of relevant Existentialists such as Nietzsche, Camus and/or Sartre.
- Reference to Atheistic Humanism’s support for this claim, humanity must turn to science and technology to shape their future.
- An exploration of the concept of Absurdity within Existentialist teaching.
- Reference to secularism’s rejection of any form of Divine plan or purpose to life.
- Reference to relevant analogies such as the struggle of Sisyphus and/or the paper knife analogy.
- Reference to selected writings such as *The Outsider*, *Nausea*, *The Humanist Manifestos*.
- An exploration of the impact of being in a meaningless universe, humanity is condemned to be free.
- An exploration as to whether the quest to shape one’s destiny is best undertaken by the individual or by the group, as Humanism asserts.

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)** “Religion alone offers humanity the greatest level of freedom and hope.”
To what extent do you agree with this claim? You must refer to other aspects of human experience in your answer.

Answers may include:

- An evaluation of the claim that religion alone offers the highest level of freedom and hope.
- Support for this claim by theists, religion as offering humanity ultimate hope and freedom.
- An exploration of the eschatological teachings recorded within one or more faith traditions.
- An exploration of ultimate freedom and hope as lying outside this temporal world.
- An exploration of religion as offering both physical and metaphysical liberation.
- An exploration as to what constitutes the ‘greatest level’ of freedom and/or hope.
- An exploration of the nature of God as omnibenevolent and omniscient.
- Counter challenges to the stated claim by secularists, religion as offering false hope and as limiting human freedom, e.g. the marxist critique.
- Reference to historical and/or contemporary examples of religious repression.
- Reference to specific examples whereby theocracies and/or atheistic regimes have crushed human freedom and hopes.
- An exploration of alternative sources of human hope and freedom outside the remit of religion.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

Candidates must engage with other aspects of human experience to access

Bands 3–5

(AO2)

[30]

50

Section B

50

Total

150

**AVAILABLE
MARKS**