



*Rewarding Learning*

**ADVANCED SUBSIDIARY (AS)  
General Certificate of Education  
2025**

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## **Religious Studies**

**Assessment Unit AS 5**

*assessing*

The Celtic Church in Ireland in the 5th, 6th and 7th Centuries

**[SRE51]**

**THURSDAY 29 MAY, MORNING**

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**MARK  
SCHEME**

## **General Marking Instructions**

### ***Introduction***

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

### ***Assessment objectives***

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

Candidates should be able to:

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

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

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

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

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

### ***Positive marking***

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

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

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

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

### **Levels of response**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Quality of written communication**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Section A

AVAILABLE  
MARKS

Answer **one** question from Section A

- 1 (a) How did the political and social background in Ireland before Patrick influence the development of Celtic Christianity?

Answers may include:

- The rural nature of the country with a lack of any communication network meant difficulties with travel for Patrick and other missionaries.
- The fact that Ireland was tribal and hierarchical influenced the work of Patrick and other missionaries as they sought to convert the king and the nobility first.
- Patrick's references to difficulties in securing freedom of movement to evangelise and the giving of gifts to allow him to travel.
- As a stranger, Patrick had no protection under Brehon law so the role of sureties or guarantees influenced the way Patrick's own mission developed.
- His reference to the payment of the honour-price of fifteen men in order to have the freedom to travel and preach.
- The continuing influence of Brehon law on society dictating cultural practices included the importance of fosterage, which was later adopted by the monasteries.
- The Irish institution of kingship influenced the later development of the monasteries as they adopted cultural practices and modelled the monastic settlement on the principle of family.
- Egalitarian inheritance in families meant that women could have remarkable influence, and thus advantageous to missionaries who found women more receptive to the gospel.
- The presence of inheritance laws also influenced the development of monasticism as abbots generally belonged to the same family dynasty.
- The system of sick maintenance and fasting influenced later penitential practice.
- The ever-present danger of raids such as that by Coroticus and his soldiers, and the challenge this presented for Patrick and other missionaries.
- The presence and experience of slavery may have influenced Patrick's concern for slaves.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO1)

[25]

- (b) Assess the claim that the evidence for Christianity in pre-Patrician Ireland is unreliable and therefore unconvincing. Justify your answer.

AVAILABLE  
MARKS

Answers may include:

- The fact little historical evidence exists may lead to speculation among scholars.
- There is little concrete information about this era as written sources are from a later period.
- However, some information on the arrival of Christianity in Ireland before Patrick can be gleaned from archaeological evidence-the clear possibility of trade routes between Ireland and Britain, and Ireland and Europe lends itself to the meeting of Christians by Irish traders.
- Reference to Prosper's statement of the appointment of Palladius as Bishop to the Irish indicating that there were a significant number of Christians in Ireland to require a Bishop.
- Patrick in his Confessio hints at a comparison between his mission and the mission of others before – "where no one else has ever penetrated".
- References by Ptolemy and Tacitus to places in Ireland shows an awareness of trade links between Ireland and continental Europe.
- Some British refugees in Ireland at the time of the collapse of the Empire, may point to but doesn't confirm the presence of Christianity.
- Archaeological evidence of coins, pottery and metal work support the belief that trade links existed but may not be reliable evidence to confirm Christianity.
- Contact between Ireland and the Roman Empire with evidence from Celtic craft skills and archaic Irish poetry is seen as a possible entry of Christianity into Ireland.
- The presence of continental scholars who brought learning to Ireland were accepted as being Christian.
- Raids on the east coast of Ireland may also be a possible means of contact between British Christians and the Irish.
- Scholarly debate over the existence of heresies contaminating Irish Christianity.
- Linguistic evidence of Christian terminology such as the word for priest and Easter.
- However, scant evidence of the presence of pre-Patrician saints in the south of Ireland such as Ciaran, Ailbe and Declan points to the unreliability of the evidence.
- Assessment of the reliability of the evidence and whether it is convincing or not.
- The writings of Augustine and Jerome (5th century) refer to Christians in Ireland, thereby supporting the view that Christianity was already present.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO2)

[25]

50

2 (a) In what ways is the portrait of Patrick in Muirchú's **Life of Patrick** different from that in the **Confessio**?

AVAILABLE  
MARKS

Answers may include:

- Muirchú's Life of Patrick as a piece of hagiography tends to exaggerate and edify Patrick.
- Reference to the characteristics of hagiography which seek to include the saint's ability to pronounce curses and work miracles is therefore different from the Confessio.
- Hagiography includes references to the saint's closeness to nature and animals, absent in the Confessio.
- Anything likely to portray the saint in a negative light is often omitted or briefly referred to, therefore we do not see a true portrait of Patrick from Muirchú.
- From the Confessio we see Patrick as a caring pastor working to meet the spiritual needs of his community of converts.
- The Confessio highlights Patrick's role as a shepherd.
- It is filled with references to his vulnerability and humility, with awareness of his sinfulness as a boy.
- How his life's work is filled with his gratitude to God for saving him and for God's support during his mission permeates the Confessio.
- His love of prayer and commitment to his mission are evident in his writing.
- His sense of inadequacy is clear throughout the Confessio but lacking in Muirchú's Life.
- His strong faith and trust in God are clear to see in the Confessio.
- Throughout the Confessio we see his courage and wisdom dealing with adversity.
- Appropriate textual references from both works.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO1)

[25]

(b) “Celtic hagiographical writings contain no historically accurate information, but have value for other reasons.”

To what extent do you agree with this view? Justify your answer.

Answers may include:

- The overall purpose of hagiography seeks to edify and promote the saint and therefore hagiography is not a history.
- Argument that despite the lack of historical information about the saint, hagiography does contain valuable historical information about the time it was written.
- Possible reference to incidents in Muirchú’s Life that refer to a north church in Armagh that implies the existence of more than one church there.
- The inclusion of the story of Dáire, the doe and the fawn indicating the tradition of the pagan cult of the deer associated with Armagh - giving possible insight into the remnants of paganism or superstitions that were still in existence at the time of writing, e.g. views of Gougaud.
- Agreement that the nature of hagiographical writing leads many scholars to approach its historical reliability with caution, e.g. Binchy.
- Certain incidents throw light on local disputes, e.g. Muirchú’s account of the dispute over Patrick’s body-indicating the ongoing strife between the Airthir and the Ulaid.
- The importance of Cogitosus’ Life of Brigit as it is the first of such texts to be written.
- Consideration of the fact that despite scant detail on Brigit herself, there is some historical value in the recording of material concerning the church at Kildare and its involvement in secular affairs.
- Reference to details from Cogitosus of worshipping in a double monastery.
- Reference to the spiritual value of the texts, e.g. the saints’ lives are examples of what it means to live like Christ.
- References to the saints’ ascetism, compassion and holiness which served to influence people of that time.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO2)

[25]

50

AVAILABLE  
MARKS

## Section B

AVAILABLE  
MARKS

Answer **one** question from Section B

- 3 (a) “The change from episcopal to monastic organisation in the Celtic Church was a gradual process.”  
Give an account of the evidence to support this statement.

Answers may include:

- Definition of the term episcopal; a hierarchical church government with bishops and priests in parishes and dioceses.
- The change to a monastic organisation in the Celtic Church was gradual and not complete until the 8th century.
- Patrick’s writings refer to his authority as bishop, e.g. to denounce the actions of Coroticus, and to excommunicate him and his soldiers indicate an episcopal church.
- Though Patrick spoke highly of the ascetic life and encouraged it, he did not establish monasteries.
- Patrick speaks of ordaining a native clergy in the Confessio.
- The First Synod of Patrick, which Hughes dates to the 6th century indicates a church governed by bishops residing in dioceses.
- The earliest sources written about Patrick all suggest an episcopal church, e.g. The Annals of Ulster.
- Approximately a century after Patrick’s death the church began to depart from the episcopal structure and towards a monastic system of government.
- Ireland’s terrain and lack of Roman infrastructure and organisation may have influenced a monastic structure as the century progressed.
- The Celtic ideas of kin and kingship may have been a contributing factor in the gradual change in organisation.
- The influence of missionaries from Britain and the continent who favoured monasticism may have contributed to the change.
- Examples of settlements such as Armagh, which already resembled monasteries allowing for an easier change to a monastic organisation.
- The effect of the plague of the 540s on the episcopal churches while monasteries were more protected due to their semi closed structure.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO1)

[25]

- (b) “Self-denial and asceticism are essential for religion.”  
With reference to other aspects of human experience, evaluate this view.  
Justify your answer.

Answers may include:

- An open-ended response citing relevant contemporary and/or historical examples.
- The suggestion that self-denial, ascetism and renunciation of material goods are essential in any era for followers of religion.
- Reference to the teaching of Jesus for his followers to take up their cross daily, indicating a life which involves suffering and self-denial.
- The view that followers of Christianity often emulate the lives of the saints and their example of self-denial, e.g. St Francis of Assisi.
- Exploration of the connection between self-denial through the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and the demands they make on those in religious life.
- Reference to ascetism in other world religions, e.g. the fast of Ramadan in Islam where Muslims practice self-denial for a whole month; Sadhus in Hinduism who let go of earthly attachments to reconnect with the Divine.
- The argument that self-denial and ascetism can be counterproductive and lead to more suffering in a world where suffering exists in many forms.
- Reference to the fact that non-religious people can often lead austere lives of self-denial and ascetism.
- Some examples from recent times of religious in the Roman Catholic Church who have not displayed characteristics of self -denial and ascetism and accumulated great amounts of wealth and property.
- Some argue that modern addictions to social media or consumerism in general has led to a growing need for the virtues of self-denial and ascetism.
- The demands of our ‘time poor’ culture coupled with the cults of individualism and materialism may mean engagement in ascetic practices may be limited and unsatisfying.
- Reference to some modern examples of religious who live according to these characteristics, e.g. Pope Francis who has advised Christians to “leave a legacy of good rather than just goods”. His example of living frugally in a small apartment rather than the Pope’s apartment in the Vatican.
- The example of John Calvin who lived an austere life and who believed self-denial was an essential part of the Christian life.
- The popularity of modern examples of religious living which involves missionary or charity work without the harshness of asceticism; how some might laud the value of self-denial but not necessarily severe asceticism.
- Awareness of other features of religion that could be essential, e.g. prayer.
- The danger that religious piety can lead to pride.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

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

(AO2)

[25]

AVAILABLE  
MARKS

50

4 (a) How did the monasteries play a part in the development of penitential practice in the Celtic Church?

AVAILABLE  
MARKS

Answers may include:

- Celtic penitential practice was mainly private unlike the public system practised elsewhere in the Church.
- Many scholars believe the harshness of the public penances in the rest of Europe and almost total exclusion from the sacraments wasn't practised in the Celtic Church.
- The monks had an important role in the spiritual and pastoral life of the community and through the Penitentials they encouraged the penitents to strive for Christian perfection.
- The monasteries provided a place of sanctuary in order to confess and complete penances.
- Not only major sins were confessed but monks encouraged the confessing of minor sins and sins of thought also.
- The custom of repeatable confessing of sins was encouraged by the monasteries, where the administration of penance was exercised.
- The monasteries provided for the important role the anamchara played as a soul friend or spiritual director to those seeking reconciliation with God.
- Examples from Adomnán's Life of Colmcille indicate penitents arriving at Iona to complete penances and also sent to other islands to complete their penances.
- Penance were seen as remedies for sin, as medicine for the soul, which allowed for the restoration of a penitent's relationship with God thus, the monastery was a perfect place to complete penances.
- The influence of Finnian in extolling the virtue of penance; the availability of penance for the laity.
- The influence of Columbanus, his specific advice for monks, clerics and laity.
- The influence of Cummean, his viewing of penance in medicinal terms.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO1)

[25]

- (b) “The challenge to show mercy as seen in penitential practice continues to have relevance for everyone.”  
 With reference to other aspects of human experience, assess this claim.  
 Justify your answer.

Answers may include:

- An open-ended response citing relevant contemporary and/or historical examples.
- Discussion of the importance of showing mercy in the teaching and example of Jesus in the gospels.
- Actions such as giving to charity and caring for the sick are seen as acts of mercy and are especially relevant today.
- The values emphasised in penitential practice such as mercy and compassion are still important in modern society.
- The concept of a merciful God is present in the main world religions.
- Possible reference to the value placed on being merciful in Judaism, e.g. the festival of Yom Kippur encourages Jews to pray for mercy for others; and in Islam, e.g. the Qur’an encourages Muslims to show mercy towards those who have done wrong.
- How some people struggle to show mercy or forgiveness especially when heinous crimes are committed, and no remorse is shown.
- Reference to the failure of religion to show a moral compass in past events leading to its irrelevance for some in society e.g. Christian Crusades.
- Possible reference to ongoing conflict and war in society highlighting a lack of mercy, e.g. Israel-Gaza conflict.
- Exploration of the increase in modern society towards online abuse and general lack of forgiveness for minor failings.
- Reference to those who have shown tremendous examples of mercy and forgiveness such as Gordon Wilson or Pope John Paul II.
- Some argue too strong an emphasis on mercy can lead to a departure from justice.
- The benefits of restorative justice in preventing conflict and repairing harm and relevant examples.
- The continued relevance of actual penitential texts for religious believers.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

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

(AO2)

[25]

**Total**

**AVAILABLE  
MARKS**

50

**100**