



GCE A LEVEL MARKING SCHEME

SUMMER 2025

**A LEVEL
UNIT 3 - OPTION C
A STUDY OF JUDAISM**

1120UC0-1

About this marking scheme

The purpose of this marking scheme is to provide teachers, learners, and other interested parties, with an understanding of the assessment criteria used to assess this specific assessment.

This marking scheme reflects the criteria by which this assessment was marked in a live series and was finalised following detailed discussion at an examiners' conference. A team of qualified examiners were trained specifically in the application of this marking scheme. The aim of the conference was to ensure that the marking scheme was interpreted and applied in the same way by all examiners. It may not be possible, or appropriate, to capture every variation that a candidate may present in their responses within this marking scheme. However, during the training conference, examiners were guided in using their professional judgement to credit alternative valid responses as instructed by the document, and through reviewing exemplar responses.

Without the benefit of participation in the examiners' conference, teachers, learners and other users, may have different views on certain matters of detail or interpretation. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that this marking scheme is used alongside other guidance, such as published exemplar materials or Guidance for Teaching. This marking scheme is final and will not be changed, unless in the event that a clear error is identified, as it reflects the criteria used to assess candidate responses during the live series.

Marking guidance for examiners, please apply carefully and consistently:

Positive marking

It should be remembered that candidates are writing under examination conditions and credit should be given for what the candidate writes, rather than adopting the approach of penalising him/her for any omissions. It should be possible for a very good response to achieve full marks and a very poor one to achieve zero marks. Marks should not be deducted for a less than perfect answer if it satisfies the criteria of the mark scheme.

Exemplars in the mark scheme are only meant as helpful guides. Therefore, any other acceptable or suitable answers should be credited even though they are not actually stated in the mark scheme.

Two main phrases are deliberately placed throughout each mark scheme to remind examiners of this philosophy. They are:

- “Candidates could include some or all of the following, but other relevant points should be credited.”
- “This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.”

Rules for marking

1. Differentiation will be achieved on the basis of candidates' response.
2. No mark scheme can ever anticipate or include every possible detail or interpretation; examiners should use their professional judgement to decide whether a candidate's particular response answers the question in relation to the particular assessment objective.
3. Candidates will often express their ideas in language different from that given in any mark scheme or outline. Positive marking therefore, on the part of examiners, will recognise and credit correct statements of ideas, valid points and reasoned arguments irrespective of the language employed.

Banded mark schemes

Banded mark schemes are divided so that each band has a relevant descriptor. The descriptor provides a description of the performance level for that band. Each band contains marks. Examiners should first read and annotate a candidate's answer to pick out the evidence that is being assessed in that question. Once the annotation is complete, the mark scheme can be applied. This is done as a two-stage process.

Banded mark schemes stage 1 – deciding on the band

When deciding on a band, the answer should be viewed holistically. Beginning at the lowest band, examiners should look at the candidate's answer and check whether it matches the descriptor for that band. Examiners should look at the descriptor for that band and see if it matches the qualities shown in the candidate's answer. If the descriptor at the lowest band is satisfied, examiners should move up to the next band and repeat this process for each band until the descriptor matches the answer.

If an answer covers different aspects of different bands within the mark scheme, a 'best fit' approach should be adopted to decide on the band and then the candidate's response should be used to decide on the mark within the band. For instance if a response is mainly in band 2 but with a limited amount of band 3 content, the answer would be placed in band 2, but the mark awarded would be close to the top of band 2 as a result of the band 3 content.

Banded mark schemes stage 2 – deciding on the mark

Once the band has been decided, examiners can then assign a mark. During standardising (at the Examiners' marking conference), detailed advice from the Principal Examiner on the qualities of each mark band will be given. Examiners will then receive examples of answers in each mark band that have been awarded a mark by the Principal Examiner. Examiners should mark the examples and compare their marks with those of the Principal Examiner.

When marking, examiners can use these examples to decide whether a candidate's response is of a superior, inferior or comparable standard to the example. Examiners are reminded of the need to revisit the answer as they apply the mark scheme in order to confirm that the band and the mark allocated is appropriate to the response provided. Indicative content is also provided for banded mark schemes. Indicative content is not exhaustive, and any other valid points must be credited. In order to reach the highest bands of the mark scheme a learner need not cover all of the points mentioned in the indicative content, but must meet the requirements of the highest mark band.

Awarding no marks to a response

Where a response is not creditworthy, that is it contains nothing of any relevance to the question, or where no response has been provided, no marks should be awarded.

A Level Generic Band Descriptors

Band (marks)	Assessment Objective AO1 – Section A questions [30 marks] <i>Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:</i> - 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 - approaches to the study of religion and belief.
5 (25-30 marks)	• Thorough, accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. • An extensive and relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set. • The response shows an excellent standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • The response demonstrates extensive depth and/or breadth. Excellent use of evidence and examples. • Thorough and accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Insightful connections are made between the various approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable). • An extensive range of views of scholars/schools of thought used accurately and effectively. • Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Excellent spelling, punctuation and grammar.
4 (19-24 marks)	• Accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. • A detailed, relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set. • The response shows a very good standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth. Good use of evidence and examples. • Accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Purposeful connections are made between the various approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable). • A range of scholarly views/schools of thought used largely accurately and effectively. • Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Very good spelling, punctuation and grammar.
3 (13-18 marks)	• Mainly accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. • A satisfactory response, which generally answers the main demands of the question set. • The response shows a satisfactory standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth in some areas. Satisfactory use of evidence and examples. • Mainly accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Sensible connections made between the various approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable). • A basic range of scholarly views/schools of thought used. • Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Satisfactory spelling, punctuation and grammar.
2 (7-12 marks)	• Limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Basic level of accuracy and relevance. • A basic response, addressing some of the demands of the question set. • Partially accurate response, with some signs of coherence, clarity and organisation. • The response demonstrates limited depth and/or breadth, including limited use of evidence and examples. • Some accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Makes some basic connections between the various approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable) • A limited range of scholarly views/schools of thought used. • Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Some minor, recurring errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
1 (1-6 marks)	• Very limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Low level of accuracy and relevance. • A very limited response, with little attempt to address the question. • Very limited accuracy within the response, with little coherence, clarity and organisation. • The response demonstrates very limited depth and/or breadth. Very limited use of evidence and examples. • Little or no reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Very few or no connections made between the various approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable) • Little or no use of scholarly views/schools of thought. • Some grasp of basic specialist language and vocabulary. • Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar affect the meaning and clarity of communication. N.B. A maximum of 3 marks should be awarded for a response that only demonstrates 'knowledge in isolation'.
0	• No relevant information.

Band	Assessment Objective AO2 - Section B questions [30 marks] <i>Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.</i>
5 (25-30 marks)	• Confident critical analysis and perceptive evaluation of the issue. • A response that successfully identifies and thoroughly addresses the issues raised by the question set. • The response shows an excellent standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • Thorough, sustained and clear views are given, supported by extensive, detailed reasoning and/or evidence. • The views of scholars/schools of thought are used extensively, appropriately and in context. • Confident and perceptive analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable). • Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Excellent spelling, punctuation and grammar.
4 (19-24 marks)	• Purposeful analysis and effective evaluation of the issue. • The main issues raised by the question are identified successfully and addressed. • The views given are clearly supported by detailed reasoning and/or evidence. • The response shows a very good standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • Views of scholars/schools of thought are used appropriately and in context. • Purposeful analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable). • Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Very good spelling, punctuation and grammar.
3 (13-18 marks)	• Satisfactory analysis and relevant evaluation of the issue. • Most of the issues raised by the question are identified successfully and have generally been addressed. • The response shows a satisfactory standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • Most of the views given are satisfactorily supported by reasoning and/or evidence. • Views of scholars/schools of thought are generally used appropriately and in context. • Sensible analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable). • Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Satisfactory spelling, punctuation and grammar.
2 (7-12 marks)	• Some valid analysis and inconsistent evaluation of the issue. • A limited number of issues raised by the question set are identified and partially addressed. • Partially accurate response, with some signs of coherence, clarity and organisation. • A basic attempt to justify the views given, but they are only partially supported with reason and/or evidence. • Basic use of the views of scholars/schools of thought, appropriately and in context. • Makes some analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable). • Some mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Some minor, recurring errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
1 (1-6 marks)	• A basic analysis and limited evaluation of the issue. • An attempt has been made to identify and address the issues raised by the question set. • Very limited accuracy within the response, with little coherence, clarity and organisation. • Little attempt to justify a view with reasoning or evidence. • Little or no use of the views of scholars/schools of thought. • Limited analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable). • Some use of basic specialist language and vocabulary. • Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar affect the meaning and clarity of communication.
0	• No relevant analysis or evaluation.

WJEC GCE A LEVEL RELIGIOUS STUDIES

OPTION C – A STUDY OF JUDAISM

SUMMER 2025 MARK SCHEME

To be read in conjunction with the generic level descriptors provided.

Section A

1. Examine the importance of Rashi in the history of Talmudic study.

[AO1 30]

Candidates could include some or of the following, but other relevant responses will be credited.

- Rashi's importance in the history of Talmudic study is evident in the fact that his authority extends to the present day; and no Jew who studies Talmud does so without his influence. Indeed, as Robinson says, 'Most Jews who have had even a fleeting acquaintance with biblical commentary know the phrase "Chumash with Rashi" – a copy of the Five Books of Moses that include Rashi's commentaries.'
- His writings are rich in derash, midrashic folklore and homilies which illustrate his points with charm and wit. Furthermore, the midrashim which he quotes have become the common heritage of the ordinary Jew who has come to know them through Rashi rather than from contact with midrashic literature.
- Rashi's approach to midrash is characterised by his reliance on peshat, the 'plain' or 'literal' sense meaning of a passage. Rashi's commentary preserves rabbinic interpretations of the plain meaning of the Bible. An example of this approach can be given through consideration of his commentary on Exodus 23:19 and/or Leviticus 24:19-20 for example, in which Rashi supports the rabbinic interpretation of the verses by applying a rigid linguistic analysis.
- Rashi's great skill as a grammarian is also evident in his work, and his interpretation of Genesis 1:1 can be used to display his use of peshat as well as traditional exegesis through language and grammar in order to analyse the text. For example, when analysing the words 'Bereshit bara' meaning 'In the beginning God created' Rashi indicates his intention to proceed by means of peshat when he says: 'If, however, you wish to explain it in its plain sense, explain it thus ...'
- Rashi's commentary on the Talmud continues to be acknowledged as the definitive explanation to the present day due to the way in which he takes the student through the text phrase by phrase in explanation of the topic. He also writes in clear, concise, and readable Hebrew, and is also considered to have the gift of anticipating readers' questions.
- Furthermore, his grasp of the generations of scholars who have gone before him has enabled him to make a clear distinction between what the Bible actually said (the peshat), and what has been read into it (derash) by tradition.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

2. Examine the concepts of Devekut (clinging on) and Tikkun (repair) as found in Kabbalah.

[AO1 30]

Candidates could include some or all of the following, but other relevant responses will be credited.

- Devekut (clinging on) is a fundamental concept of Kabbalah, and the primary goal of the mystic. Its meaning denotes the concept of 'clinging on' which signifies achieving communion with God; a state in which all other thoughts, senses and experiences are cast aside.
- Devekut is usually described as the highest step on a spiritual ladder, which can only be reached after the believer has mastered the attitudes of fear of God, love of God for example, and which is achieved mostly during times of prayer, meditation and right intention (kavvanah). The aspect in the divine world to which the mystic prays when aspiring to reach the state of devekut is usually the Shekinah.
- Communion with God through prayer is transitory, and it is only after death that a believer can hope that their soul will achieve a permanent state of devekut with God. Such a union, however, will not be achieved until the redemption after the coming of the Messiah, when all just Jews will live together eternally in the state of devekut.
- The state of devekut is also connected with prophecy.
- Tikkun (repair) is a key concept in Kabbalah. Its significance grew as a result of the ideology of Isaac Luria who claimed that the goal of kabbalah was to advance the tikkun so that the damage caused by the 'shattering of the vessels' can be undone. Every time a person performs a mitzvah they raise one of the holy sparks out of the forces of evil and restores it to the upper world.
- The concept of tikkun occurs in the Zohar. One passage, for example, describes the act of prayer as involving four different grades of tikkun: restoration of oneself; the world; the world above; and the holy name. Specific prayers such as the Hallelujah Psalms, the Shema and Amidah are linked to the tikkun of the system of Sefirot. The restoration of the lower and upper worlds will only be accomplished when the prayer that is directed toward them reaches its goal.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

Section B

3. 'Halakhah is more important than Aggadah for Judaism.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

Candidates could include some or all of the following, but other relevant points should be credited.

- It could be argued that there is such a strong relationship between Halakhah and Aggadah that it makes it difficult to argue for the importance of one over the other; with some scholars placing equal value on both aspects of Midrash based upon the relationship between the two, in that the ethical content of Aggadah informs the legal decisions of Halakhah.
- A further example of the importance that is attached to both Halakhah and Aggadah in the same measure can be discussed with reference to Genesis 27:28 for example. When Isaac blessed Jacob, he said: 'May God give you the dew of heaven and the fat of the earth, and plenty of new grain and wine.' The Midrash interprets this in the following way: 'Dew of heaven is Scripture, the fat of the earth is Mishnah, new grain is halakhah, wine is aggadah.' It could be argued that there appears to be no suggestion here that one is of greater importance than the other.
- Some might claim however, that it is Midrash Halakhah that should be held in a position of greater importance due to the role it has played throughout the history of Judaism. For example, the inclusion of prohibitions which were added in an attempt to ensure that the mitzvot were not broken unknowingly.
- However, it might be argued that even within Halakhah some aspects are more important than others, and reference could be made to the three categories of Halakhah as identified by the rabbis: that which derives logically and clearly from a scriptural verse; that which has been obtained by interpretation; that which is derived from Moses at Sinai which consist of strongly held traditions believed to be part of the original Oral Torah. Perhaps it is the latter which holds greater authority.
- In the same way, some might suggest that it is also important to analyse the perceived strengths and weaknesses of Aggadah in order to be able to judge its importance in relation to Halakhah.
- Account also needs to be taken of the diversity within Judaism regarding the notion that Halakhah is the revealed will of God. Reform Jews, for instance, whilst believing that God did reveal the Law to Moses, consider the Torah to be the product of human minds. Halakhah therefore functions differently for Jews from this particular denomination as decisions are based upon responsa. Even though responsa are themselves Halakhic documents that give considered answers to the questions asked, they are regarded as advisory by Reform Jews rather than being binding or obligatory. Does the Reform view of Halakhah dilute its importance in any way?

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

4. 'Judaism has been successful in meeting the challenges of science.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

Candidates could include some or all of the following, but other relevant points should be credited.

- It could be argued that scientific discoveries have changed the way in which people have come to understand the world, and that it is now possible to accept certain principles without reference to God. It could therefore be asserted that one of the most basic principles of Judaism, that God created the universe and everything in it, has been challenged by scientific principles.
- However, even within Judaism, there is speculation about the nature of the act of creation, and reference could be made to views found within rabbinic literature to further the contention that Judaism does not hold a strong position that could be used successfully as a response to the challenges posed by science.
- A line of argument that could be used to illustrate support for the statement is to refer to evolutionary theory. At first it might appear that scientific theory presents a major challenge to the biblical account of creation. However, some assert that it is possible that God used scientific laws to create material reality. This position is held by the majority of Conservative and Reform Jews and is based upon the notion of 'theistic evolution': that there is room for belief in a creator, God, who set everything into motion.
- However, it is evident that many ultra-Orthodox Jews reject scientific theory relating to the theory of evolution. This is because there remains an unwillingness to re-interpret scripture in order to bring about a reconciliation with scientific discoveries as it is believed that the Bible contains eternal truth. As a result of this, it could be argued that, for this denomination within Judaism, science has not posed any challenges at all, as it does not have a place within their worldview.
- Candidates might also approach this statement from the standpoint of Jewish responses to specific advances in medical science which have occurred over the last half a century; with reference being made to Jewish medical ethics where decisions are made based upon Halakhic tradition.
- The challenges that arise concerning the interpretation of scripture in relation to issues such as embryo research could be used to illustrate the dilemmas that emerge when trying to stay true to the responsibilities of the covenant.
- The Jewish principle of pikuach nefesh could also be cited in order to illustrate that the saving, protecting, and preservation of life is of utmost importance, and that it has its basis in the Torah (Leviticus 19:16). Thus, any new medical procedures which can bring about improvement to life, or even to save a life, should be accepted.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

5. 'Jewish responses to pluralism have been ineffective.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

Candidates could include some or all of the following, but other relevant points should be credited.

- It could be argued that religious pluralism appears initially to present an outlook that is in contradiction to the traditional standpoint of the Jewish faith based upon the premise that it is Judaism alone that contains God's exclusive revelation to humanity. However, some have pointed out that the Torah begins with God creating a covenant first with Adam, and then with Noah, and that these covenants had both been universal in nature. This interpretation could therefore be used as evidence to suggest that Judaism does not hold the singular position in God's relationship with humanity.
- However, Reform Judaism stands out in particular as being totally accepting of the validity of other religions as is evident within clause 1 of the Pittsburgh Platform which is unequivocal on this matter. It could therefore reasonably be argued that because Reform Judaism accepts the validity of other world faiths, it, amongst other Jewish groups, presents us with the best opportunity of assessing the effectiveness or otherwise of responses to pluralism.
- Some would begin by perceiving that Reform Jews have been effective in their responses to pluralism. For example, the very fact that Reform Jews accept that the Torah is simply one record amongst others leads them to accept that the sacred writings of other faiths should all be held in the same regard. Furthermore, Reform Jewish attitudes to pluralism have also been effective in bringing about a revision of the doctrine of the Jews as the chosen people of God. Instead of a 'nation', Reform Jews now regard themselves as a 'religious community.'
- It could also be claimed that it is principally Reform Judaism that has been effective in the sphere of interfaith dialogue. Evidence for this assertion can be found in the Pittsburgh Platform of 1999 which advocates that Reform Jews 'seek dialogue and joint action with people of other faiths in the hope that together we can bring peace, freedom and justice to our world.' However, perhaps the effectiveness of this declaration can only fully be judged by the actions that have emerged from it. Nevertheless, it can certainly be acknowledged that the Reform Jewish community has become involved with those of the Christian faith for example, through the work of the International Council of Christians and Jews.
- It is also evident that attitudes are changing towards pluralism within the Orthodox tradition where there has been a recognition of the need for a common mission between Jews and Christians to perfect the world under the sovereignty of God. This suggests that there is a spiritual value to pluralism which transcends religious differences.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

6. 'It is impossible for Jews in Britain to assimilate into secular society.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

Candidates could include some or all of the following, but other relevant points should be credited.

- It could be argued that there are many challenges which have the potential to make it difficult for Jews in Britain to assimilate fully into a secular society, and such a line of argument could be based upon the requirements for Orthodox Jews to keep the laws of kashrut in their entirety.
- Another argument highlighting the difficulty of assimilation could be that there is a problem in reconciling the rituals and requirements of certain Jewish rites of passage with the law of the land.
- Jewish education is another area in which it could be argued that segregation is encouraged rather than promoting assimilation. On the one hand it is understandable that Orthodox Jews wish their children to be educated in an environment that reflects their specific values and morals; however, on the other hand, faith schools might increase the sense of alienation felt by Jewish children by making them aware that they are culturally different from those in the wider secular society in which they live.
- The issue of religious dress and strict religious lifestyle, particularly within the Hasidic Jewish community might also act as a barrier to assimilation. However, it could be asserted that this particular Jewish denomination do not feel the need to assimilate as the laws are a reminder of their distinctiveness as Jews.
- Contrary to the statement, it can be shown that some Jews have been able to assimilate into British society very successfully. For example, Reform Jews, who have always been of the opinion that that it is important to be assimilated into the society in which one lives. Evidence for this can be offered by reference to the Reform position as set out in the Pittsburgh Platform which allows for Reform Jews to maintain their religious devotional lifestyle without it having a detrimental effect upon their ability to function fully in a secular society.
- Some might argue that assimilation isn't required anyway due to the fact that British society embraces Jewish religious identity along with a wide variety of religions, creeds and cultures. Evidence for this can be demonstrated by the fact that Jews have been living successfully in Britain for many centuries, thus indicating that their presence has not been hindered by a lack of total assimilation.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.