



GCE A LEVEL MARKING SCHEME

SUMMER 2025

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES - UNIT 4
RELIGION AND ETHICS**

1120U40-1

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

UNIT 4 - RELIGION AND ETHICS

SUMMER 2025 MARK SCHEME

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

Section A

1. Examine Naturalism as a meta-ethical approach.

[AO1 30]

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

- Naturalism is a meta-ethical approach which claims that objective moral laws exist independently of human beings. Morality is not therefore the result of human rational thought but is a reality existing outside the human mind.
- As such, morality can best be understood by observation of the natural world using an *a posteriori* approach. Moral statements can be regarded as universal and objective truths which can be analysed empirically.
- Ethical statements are seen as propositions which can be verified, and therefore are cognitive. As a result, ethical statements are objective truths which are universal facts about the world and therefore this presents a realist view of morality.
- Naturalists all agree that we can analyse moral terms such as 'good' and explain these in other 'natural' terms. For example, Utilitarianism is an example of Naturalism based on analysing an event to work out how much pleasure (a natural governing principle) will be created for how many people.
- Therefore, moral terms such as 'good' can be reduced to naturalistic terms such as 'maximising happiness'. This shows the link between the meta-ethical theory which considers what goodness is, and the normative ethic which shows how humans should act.
- For example, if we observe an armed robbery, what we see are not only the factual points about how the robbery is carried out, but also we can perceive from our observations the fact that it is wrong as it causes more pain than pleasure.
- Candidates could comment on the work of F.H. Bradley who, while his ideas are closer to idealism, has valuable things to say related to naturalism.
- Bradley opposed Kant's idea that morality was based solely on duty which could be established *a priori* as this was too isolated from social context. He also rejected the utilitarian approach of maximising happiness as this was too individualistic.
- Instead he argued that morality was related to looking at our duty in the context of our role in society. This made morality an empirical fact based on our role in life, which could be clearly observed.

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

2. Explain how Proportionalism can be seen as a hybrid of Natural Law.

[AO1 30]

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

- Proportionalism is a hybrid deontological/teleological ethic which combines Natural Law with some aspects of Virtue Ethics
- Some would strongly suggest that Natural Law itself is both deontological and teleological, as Hoose states: 'Catholic moral theology has always been predominantly teleological. However, it must be admitted that there are examples of widely taught deontological norms of behaviour in the formulation of which the teleological aspects have either been ignored or not considered important enough to be taken into consideration.'
- Therefore, for Bernard Hoose and many who support Proportionalism as an approach to Natural Law, it is Natural Law itself that is the hybrid of deontology and teleology and so Proportionalism is not at all a hybrid of Natural Law.
- Hoose did not invent Proportionalism, but attempted to explain how the idea was rooted in the work of European and American Catholic moral theologians looking as far back as Aquinas' principles of just war.
- The theory of Proportionalism is based on Natural Law and is a development of Aquinas' principle of double effect – i.e., that it is morally acceptable to perform a bad action if and only if it is the unintended (but foreseeable) side effect of another morally good action. This fits in with Aquinas' requirement that interior and exterior acts should both comply with Natural Law.
- Proportionalism develops this idea and states that the moral rules derived from the precepts of Natural Law are not absolute, but rather form strong moral guidelines which should be followed unless there is a proportionate reason not to.
- This can be summed up in the maxim 'there are certain moral rules and it can never be right to go against these unless there is a proportionate reason which would justify it.' The reason for breaking a moral rule must be 'sufficiently unusual and of sufficient magnitude.' Candidates may develop this maxim with examples taken from either immigration, capital punishment or another area of applied ethics.
- For example, it is wrong to kill (as this goes against the primary precept to defend innocent life), but in a war it may be acceptable to kill in order to defend innocent people. The defence of the innocent victims of war may be seen as a proportionate reason to break the moral law which prohibits killing. This formed the basis of Aquinas' ideas on Just War.
- Although the precepts of Natural Law describe moral perfection, as humans are seen to live in a 'fallen' world, a level of moral compromise is necessary and is described by Proportionalists as ontic evil.
- Hoose states that a good action follows the rules of Natural Law, but that sometimes the right action is one that may go against one of the precepts in order to create the lesser of two evils. Again, candidates may choose to exemplify this distinction with the use of examples taken from the two named areas of applied ethics or from any other area.
- Hoose and McCormick also distinguish between 'pre-moral' evils, which are part of the nature of the world, such as pain and death, and 'moral' evils where there is a person with the intention to cause such evil. Some actions, such as abortion, therefore can be viewed as evil, as they cause death, and thus, morally bad, as they go against the precepts of Natural Law; however, in extreme circumstances the right thing to do, as it may be the lesser of two evils.

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

Section B

3. 'Finnis' Natural Law is effective in dealing with ethical issues.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

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

- Finnis' adaptation could be argued to be more effective as Finnis offers a clear link between morality and the legal system which allows us to make laws which serve the basic goods of humanity. This gives us a moral, as well as legal, duty to obey the law and is an effective way to deal with ethical issues.
- Finnis does allow for the possibility that law-makers may not aim to establish basic goods, stating that here the principle of *lex iniusta non lex* (an unjust law is no law at all) would apply, leaving humans with a legal obligation, but not a moral one. However, this is not an effective way of dealing with moral issues as it leaves humans with very difficult decisions to make.
- An alternative point of view is that humans have always had to face this type of dilemma, and just because Finnis' Natural Law is not always applied to human law-making, this does not make it ineffective when it is applied.
- Finnis' adaptation could be more effective as, although Finnis himself follows Roman Catholicism, the theory removes the requirement for traditional belief in God. Although one of Finnis' basic goods is religion, this is in the broadest possible sense of the term. Candidates may well argue that this is a more effective approach in a secular society.
- However, the origins of Finnis' basic goods and requirements could be questioned. Although there is no requirement for a deity to create the natural order in the universe, there is still a requirement to believe in self-evident natural laws. Some claim these are derived from a Western liberal view which privileges one particular cultural perspective.
- Religious believers may object to Finnis' adaptation as it may be seen to permit actions which go against biblical laws, whereas Aquinas' Natural Law is believed to be in agreement with divine law and therefore more effective. The primary precepts are seen as universal and not derived from a particular cultural perspective.
- However, it could be argued that Aquinas' exposition of his Natural Law is very much rooted in his own cultural perspective, and that this has caused much injustice in the application of Natural Law over time.
- Aquinas' Natural Law could be seen as easier to apply to ethical issues than Finnis' version as the precepts are clearer. The basic goods and principles of practical reason are overly complicated and allow for too much human error.
- However, this could be seen as the main strength in Finnis' theory – it allows for the complicated nature of human decision making and is not a 'one size fits all' approach.

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

4. 'Moral responsibility is nothing more than an illusion.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

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

- Determinists may argue that the concept of moral responsibility is an illusion, as humans are never 'free' in the sense that they can choose between alternative courses of action.
- The concepts of philosophical, psychological or biological determinism could be used here to elaborate on this view. For example, Locke's locked room analogy illustrates the way in which universal causation gives the illusion of free will.
- However, most determinists would accept that humans can still make moral choices to some degree and should therefore be held responsible for these.
- It could be argued that the determinist position is illogical. How can it be claimed that human actions are determined by prior causes, genetic factors or psychological conditioning while at the same time arguing that humans have free choice and therefore are subject to praise or blame for their actions. The attempts to distinguish between 'free will,' which is rejected by the determinists, and the need to take moral responsibility, which is accepted, may be dismissed as incoherent or simply viewed as a pragmatic approach.
- Alternatively, it could be argued that humans are entirely free to make moral choices and are fully responsible for the choices they make.
- Following Sartre's line of reasoning, the fact that so many humans reject the idea of free will is actually proof that it exists. Humans work hard to avoid the consequences of total freedom and to claim it as an illusion as they do not wish to take on this level of moral responsibility.
- Another line of reasoning would be to look at the conflicting views found about free will in science and psychology.
- For example, Dennett's concept of genetic fixity has many critics, but Sirigu's work on free floating DNA is insufficient to reach the conclusion that free will is a proven fact. Therefore, with evidence from science on both sides of the debate, it is unclear as to whether this helps to make a judgement about human freedom to make moral choices.
- Likewise, while there is a considerable body of work in psychology to support the validity of different forms of conditioning, there are also a considerable number of studies which suggest that conditioning is not permanent and can be overcome, leaving humans capable of free moral choices.
- Soft determinists would argue that humans are capable of making free moral choices and free will is not an illusion, as long as there is no external cause preventing their choices.
- From a religious point of view, most monotheists would argue that free will is granted by God and therefore moral responsibility cannot be seen as an illusion and humans will be held accountable for their choices, even if the outcome of their choosing is known in advance by God.

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

5. 'Belief in free will makes the use of prayer irrelevant.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

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

- Candidates may argue that belief in free will makes the use of prayer irrelevant as, if all actions are controlled by human will and not by God's will, how can God act in answer to prayer?
- For example, if a response to prayer requires a human to act in a particular way, but human actions are not controlled by God, how can this action be guaranteed? Surely prayer can have no impact on the free choices individual humans can make and is therefore irrelevant?
- Given that God cannot intervene through humans without limiting free will, God could then only act directly to answer prayer, perhaps through miracles. However, this would also render prayer irrelevant as miraculous intervention would be another unacceptable denial of human free will.
- These points could be countered using Pelagius' view that prayer is valuable in terms of gaining grace. Humans cannot hope to fulfil God's law without guidance and prayer is a means by which God can reveal how humans should best use their free will: 'Free will is in all good works always assisted by divine aid.' Pelagius.
- Likewise, Arminius would argue that prayer is a means to enhance the work of the Holy Spirit in a person's life and therefore is another way to gain God's guidance in the exercise of free will. Neither scholar would see any incompatibility between belief in free will and belief in the power of prayer.
- Also, candidates could argue that belief in free will makes supplicatory prayer more relevant as believers can choose to seek God's forgiveness for sin, as such, this view of prayer makes it more valuable than the alternative view that people are predestined to seek forgiveness through prayer. Surely free choice in this case is more worthy of praise than compulsion?
- Candidates may expand on this line of argument by pointing out that prayer is less relevant if one believes in predestination as God will never change the outcome of an event in response to prayer.
- However, it could be argued that this misses the point of prayer, which is to establish a relationship with God rather than to expect to change God's will. Maybe belief in free will encourages this misunderstanding of prayer and this is what makes it seem irrelevant?
- This view would be supported by Calvin who argued that prayer should be seen as part of salvation and a way to properly focus on serving God rather than as a form of transaction in which humans ask God for things.
- Thus, it could be argued that belief in free will does make the use of prayer irrelevant as it substitutes a focus on human power at the expense of a proper understanding of the nature of the relationship between humans and God.

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

6. 'Sartre's philosophical arguments inevitably lead people to accept libertarianism.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

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

- Philosophical arguments such as those raised by Sartre may be seen as convincing and inevitably leading to the acceptance of libertarianism.
- Sartre's points regarding the absence of God leading to no higher power in control of ethical decision making may well seem convincing in a secular society.
- Sartre's concept of 'bad faith', a kind of self-deception which humans employ to avoid the responsibility of moral decision making may also be seen as an accurate representation of reality which would lead people to accept libertarianism.
- However, candidates may argue that these arguments do not lead to the inevitable acceptance of libertarianism. They may point to determinist philosophical perspectives, such as Locke's locked room analogy, which explain why the libertarian perspective is tempting but ultimately an illusion. People may be more inclined to reject libertarianism once they understand the concept of universal causation and other philosophical perspectives such as Galen Strawson's basic argument.
- Another line of argument would be to consider other types of argument which are more likely to lead to the acceptance of libertarianism. For example, psychological evidence from humanist scholars such as Rogers may be seen as more convincing than the behaviourist perspectives of Watson and Skinner. Examples which illustrate self-actualisation and the rejection of conditioning may be used here in support.
- Scientific perspectives on both sides may also be considered. There is some support for the view that free will is an evolutionary necessity and that the experience of free will underpins human social systems so should be accepted.
- However, there is a considerable amount of scientific evidence on the side of determinism, both from physics in terms of universal causation and biology in the sense of genetic determinism. Candidates may agree with Sam Harris that the weight of evidence against libertarianism is too strong to make its acceptance inevitable.
- Candidates may consider the views of compatibilist scholars and argue that neither libertarianism nor hard determinism are convincing and instead, some form of middle ground is the more inevitable position.

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