



GCE A LEVEL MARKING SCHEME

SUMMER 2025

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES - UNIT 5
PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION**

1120U50-1

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 5 – PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

SUMMER 2025 MARK SCHEME

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

Section A

1. Explain how religious language can be understood as a language game.

[AO1 30]

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

- Candidates may refer to the 'older' view of Wittgenstein in his 'picture theory' of language. He came to realise that this was far too narrow view of language which did not allow for the variety of uses of language.
- The function of religious language as being non-cognitive but meaningful as its meaning is derived from the fact that it has use within a particular context. Each context is separate and contains its own rules. These rules are agreed out of convention and they must be learned and understood.
- Religious language as being particular to the "religious form of life". This means that religious language cannot be criticised from outside of religion as the rules in each game apply only to that game.
- Wittgenstein's 'look and see' how it is being used. He said 'don't ask for its meaning, ask for its use.' Key to understanding religion is to observe how believers are actually using that language, its function in context.
- Language as a tool. Wittgenstein's builder analogy may be referred to where builders learn the name of a tool and are able to hand that tool to another when it is asked for. Each tool has a specific function that it should be used for and should not be used for anything else.
- Wittgenstein's examples, such as 'soul.' He said that when the science game asks for proof of a soul it shows a misunderstanding of the meaning of soul in the religious language game. Religion does not play the physical language game.
- D.Z Phillips' examples of belief in God, prayer and eternal life. He questions what people really mean when they use these terms. Belief in God concerns what God means in a person's life. When praying, religious believers are not making an appeal to God. Eternal life is not about life everlasting but refers to a quality of fellowship with God now.
- The key idea is 'what do people really intend when they say or do something?' Language games suggest that their intention is not to give literal assertions. In other words language has a different function to presenting facts.

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

2. Explain New Atheism's criticisms of religion.

[AO1 30]

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

- The problem of evil, both moral and natural has always been a problem that non-religious people have used as evidence against God's existence. This is still the case and continues to find its adherents amongst New Atheists today.
- New Atheism may suggest that religion contradicts and/or impedes scientific progress. As more and more advances are made in science then religion may suffer more and more as a result. Things can be explained without reference to religion and indeed, many New Atheists will say that religion should not figure in the scientific age.
- Related to this, New Atheism may say that their views are thinking and intellectual which are appropriate to today's world. Contrary to this religion is non-thinking and non-intellectual which makes the ground fertile for the rise of New Atheism.
- The soil of a secular society is fertile for the rise of New Atheism. Some would explain that a decline in the popularity of traditional religion has meant that many have rebelled and claim that a religious lifestyle is not relevant today.
- There has been a decline in traditional religion as well as a decline in belief in deities, myths and all matters supernatural gives further credibility to anti-religious propaganda, branding religion as a product of a bygone age as opposed to lending itself to the scientific era.
- A focus on extremist religious views and the link to terrorist activities may lead to responses in the form of New Atheism. This may be perpetuated by sensationalised media coverage of terrorist attacks and of fundamentalist groups.
- New Atheism may promulgate the view of religion as mythical and infantile, which was suited to a previous age but not any longer. This may include a rebuttal of much from sacred writings as well as classical arguments for God's existence.
- There may be pertinent case studies, which refer to the specific work of New Atheist apologists such as Harris, Dennett, Dawkins, and Hitchens.

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

Section B

3. 'Definitions of miracles are inadequate.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

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

- Candidates could look generally at some definitions of miracles and say that some definitions are too restrictive or too broad. This will inevitably lead them into discussion of specific scholars and their definitions.
- A coincidence for many is not a miracle. They are two separate things and to suggest that a coincidence can be taken religiously as a sign and called a miracle is nonsense. A coincidence is a purely non-religious concept, a fortuitous event.
- But it may be argued that an omnipotent God can act without breaking the laws of nature in such a way to allow for the interpretation of events as a miracle.
- An issue raised is whether a definition must/not involve God / gods. Many of the scholarly definitions do involve a God/gods or supernatural being. For many, for something to be termed a miracle, then some agency which is out of the ordinary is needed.
- However, where does this leave rational Buddhists? Where does it leave atheism? Are we to deny millions of people their claim to a miracle? This would also rule out definitions such as a miracle as 'a change for the better.'
- Another line of argument would be whether laws of nature can / not be broken. Some would argue that laws of nature could not be broken. They are generalisations based upon the evidence we have up until today. They are permeable and not set in stone. Thus, an event which appears to break a 'law' that has been established up until today, it has not. The new event would simply be incorporated into our new 'law' of nature. Hence, definitions of miracle that include reference to a break in the law of nature will have problems.
- Others would argue that that in order for something to be truly miraculous it must break the law of nature. Hence, arguments that contain reference to this are adequate.
- It could be argued that there are so many different definitions of miracle that there cannot be one adequate definition. Indeed, it may be more suitable to say that the definition of miracle that one holds as an individual is adequate for that person only. To suggest that 'one size should fit all' is an inadequate suggestion.

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

4. 'Jung was more positive than Freud about the idea of God.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

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

- The issue for debate is an evaluation of the views of both scholars regarding God and religion. On the face of it, it may seem definite that Jung is indeed more positive than Freud but there are many areas to explore where alternative views can be given.
- It could be argued that Jung did not rule out the existence of an external being. He said we could never know whether God exists. Indeed, religion is a reality at the unconscious level.
- However, it could also be argued that for Jung God was 'in the mind.' God as merely an inner psychological experience rejects the traditional view of God as an external being. The God image can be explained by archetypes but God is still only the God within. Religion would claim to have evidence for an external God with whom one can have a relationship.
- Jung sees religion in a most positive fashion. Religion promotes a positive mindset and good psychological health. This is because of the balance of archetypes which is vital for psychological maturity, 'individuation.' Religion can be of great comfort to people.
- God as an inner psychological truth may not fit the traditional image of God but it does relate to mystical belief. Indeed many would claim that Jung has explained what 'God' means.
- For Freud, religion is a neurosis that is bad for one's psychological health. He pointed out the similarity between neurotic behaviour, such as repeated hand-washing and religious rituals. These unnecessary actions are accompanied by feelings of fear and guilt.
- Religion is the product of the unconscious mind trying to come to terms with repressed memories and pressures. These ought to be faced. But religion is an attempt to control unconscious feelings and is merely wish-fulfilment.
- God is a projection of the inadequate father figure whom we fear but are in awe of. Belief in God is an illusion preventing autonomy and full mental maturity.
- However, religion does provide that comfort that one is searching for so it does perform a positive function with regard to mental health.
- In addition to this religious ritual can add to a person's spiritual growth. This could be exemplified by referring to, for example, repeated Eucharistic rituals. Freud has admitted that religious belief may help people to become more balanced. It has also been noted that he said that religion could stimulate creativity and imagination.

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

5. 'Symbolic religious language is meaningful.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

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

- There may be consideration of the issue regarding meaning for all humans, irrespective of whether they are believers or not. How do we know whether a symbol is adequate? Can symbols successfully represent that which is beyond our experience? How would we know? Can it give the wrong insights as there is no way to determine it? As symbols grow and die it can be argued that they may well cloud meaning rather than unveiling it.
- In context, symbols have a deep significance for those that interact with them. One such example may be the Christian Cross. On one level this is two bisecting lines, the vertical one usually being a third longer than the horizontal. For a non-religious person it may have a superficial meaning as indicative of the religion of Christianity or it may point to the instrument of execution commonly practiced by the Roman Empire. They may understand the notion but lack the passion that a believer would attach to it. A non-believer may have an academic interest in the symbol. However, for the religious believer it may also evoke sacrifice, love, salvation, selflessness, hope, redemption, absolution, community, identity and triumph. In this sense, there is clearly more meaning behind the symbol for the religious believer.
- However, it could be argued that the non-religious person can understand the meaning of this symbol better than the religious believer on intellectual grounds, hence deriving more meaning from it. This is because the non-believer has an objective standpoint and does not attach artificial layers of meaning to a symbol that should not be there. For the religious believer there is also an emotional engagement with the symbol. This can be seen both positively and negatively.
- Tillich suggests that symbols participate in the object that they refer to (e.g. the national flag – a symbol of the country also represents patriotism/national pride). It would seem that the participatory aspect of symbolic language would not be meaningful for those who do not engage with the symbol in this way. Religious language, according to Tillich, does not refer to an objective reality.
- Randall suggested that symbols only work because they have the ability to motivate those who interact with them. As such they have the ability to inspire people to action and to heightened states of emotion. This also has a binding effect when the symbol is accessed by groups of people who hold a common interpretation of the symbol. Again, whilst accessible on an intellectual level this social cohesion and emotion fuelling aspect of the symbol and associated symbolic language would not necessarily be meaningful to the non-believer.
- Symbolic religious language depends on context. That context may change, and this may change the meaning of the symbolic language. Such an example would be the swastika - a symbol universally held, in the context of Asian religious and cultural thought, as one of peace, unity and harmony. The change of context in the corruption of the symbol by the Nazi party in the 1930s and 1940s meant that the meaning of the symbolic religious language around this symbol has been markedly changed. The symbolic language still has meaning but this is radically altered according to the context it is understood in.
- Perhaps a non-believer would not be able to detach the sign from the symbol. Equally they may not merge the symbol with that to which it points thereby missing the true meaning of the symbol.

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

6. 'Analogies are a valid way of understanding religious language.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

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

- Logical Positivism states that religious language is meaningless. This is because religious language is neither analytic nor synthetic. Religious language cannot be verified or falsified and so is deemed to be meaningless by Logical Positivists. It can be expected that candidates will explain this before continuing to evaluate whether analogical interpretations of religious language mitigate this challenge.
- This may include discussion as to whether, in analogy, there are grounds to consider the analogy appropriate or, is there a suitable point of connection between God and humans in order to allow for such an analogical concept. Aquinas would call this the 'causal link'.
- Candidates might suggest that analogical interpretations of religious language are meaningful as God created human beings. Therefore, there is some relationship between God and creation which can be shown by analogical means. Reference might be made to a healthy bull being inferred by examining healthy urine. So too by 'examining' God's creation analogy does allow us to infer something about God.
- On the other hand, this might lead to implications such as an evil action committed by a human being is caused by an evil God.
- Others might suggest that as we have no experience of God, there is no reason to suggest that the analogy chosen is an appropriate one.
- One line of argument would be to suggest that analogical interpretations are meaningful because one cannot talk about God either univocally or equivocally. The former would suggest that God and human beings are exactly the same. The latter suggests that they are completely different. Ruling both of those out suggests that analogy might be a suitable 'middle road'.
- Analogy of proportion does allow for meaningful discussion in terms of religious language as it shows that God and human beings have qualities in proportion to the reality that they are. This can give some insight into the nature of God.
- Ian Ramsey's analogical interpretation of religious language can be considered meaningful as it illustrates how the use of certain words or phrases can give empirical anchorage to religious language. Certain words or phrases said in a particular context can allow 'the light to dawn' and 'the ice to break.'
- However, his use of 'qualifiers' could also be used to show that ultimately religious language is meaningless. If all words and phrases used about God need to be qualified, then it could be argued that one gets no nearer to any understanding of God or of anything within religious language.

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