



GCE MARKING SCHEME

SUMMER 2025

**AS (NEW)
RELIGIOUS STUDIES - UNIT 2
SECTION B - AN INTRODUCTION TO THE
PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION**

2120U20-1

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 INSTRUCTIONS

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 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.

AS Generic Band Descriptors

Band	Assessment Objective AO1 – Part (a) questions 30 marks <i>Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:</i> - <i>religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching</i> - <i>influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies</i> - <i>cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice</i> - <i>approaches to the study of religion and belief.</i>
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. • Thorough and accurate use of specialist language /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. • 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. • 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. • 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. • Some grasp of basic specialist language and vocabulary • Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar affect the meaning and clarity of communication. A maximum of 2 marks should be awarded for a response that only demonstrates 'knowledge in isolation'
0	• No relevant information.

Band	Assessment Objective AO2- Part (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. • 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 response shows a very good standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • The views given are clearly supported by detailed reasoning and/or evidence. • 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. • 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. • Some 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. • Very limited accuracy within the response, with little coherence, clarity and organisation. • An attempt has been made to identify and address the issues raised by the question set. • Little attempt to justify a view with reasoning or evidence. • Some grasp 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.

GCE AS RELIGIOUS STUDIES – UNIT 2

SECTION B: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

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

3. (a) Explain Augustinian type theodicies. [30]

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

- According to Augustine, God's creation was originally free from evil. In Genesis it says that 'God saw that it was good'. Evil did not exist before the sin of angels and humans.
- It is the free will of humans and angels that caused suffering. The deliberate turning away from divine commands, as explained in the Biblical account of the Fall, resulted in the consequential destruction of the perfect order. God is therefore not responsible for the creation of evil and cannot be blamed for it. Humans voluntarily choose (due to the gift of free will) to sin.
- Evil is not in any way a 'substance' or part of the created order. If it is not a substance, then God must not have created it. God made everything good but everything good has the chance to be corrupted. For Augustine, evil is a privation (lack) of good in the same way that the condition 'blindness' is a lack of sight.
- As all human beings are ultimately descendants (seminally present in Adam) of Adam, the first human being, then all humans share Adam's guilt and sin. We were with Adam when he ate the forbidden fruit, so his sin is our sin, his guilt is our guilt and likewise we deserve to be punished. Humans suffer through moral evil as a result of misused free will.
- This is a 'soul deciding' theodicy. The structure of the world allows individuals to make active free will choices to work towards a restorative relationship with God or to reject Him. If God had created a world without free will then this could not happen.
- God demonstrates his mercy as he makes provision for a way of redemption through Christ. This led to the Fall being referred to as the *Felix Culpa* (happy mistake) as without it then Jesus would not have been sent to redeem humanity.
- Jesus' sacrifice allowed for atonement. The relationship which was ruined at 'The Fall' was put right again by his death. This allows for humans to choose to accept Jesus and reach heaven. We are all guilty so we should all be punished. God is a fair God but also a forgiving one.
- Candidates may also give an explanation that natural evil in the world is also seen as caused by the Fall.

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

(b) 'Augustinian type theodicies are still relevant in the 21st Century.'

Evaluate this view.

[30]

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

- One line of argument that opposes the statement is that Augustinian-type theodicies are based upon outdated biology (scientific error). It is widely accepted that we are not biologically related to Adam. It may be debated therefore whether it is justifiable that humans are punished for Adam's sin. The theodicy runs contrary to our current scientific worldview which has humanity evolving to an improved state (the opposite of the Augustinian viewpoint).
- Another area opposing the statement might focus on the basis of the theodicy – i.e. the fact that it is based on a literal interpretation of the accounts of Creation and The Fall in Genesis. Today, these accounts are generally deemed to be myths and so due to an incorrect interpretation of scripture, these stories are not factual accounts.
- However, the literal truth of Creation and the Fall may be accepted by some believers today, making such theodicies consistent with tradition are still relevant in the 21st Century.
- A line of argument could argue that our logical, empirical world cannot accept the many inconsistencies inherent in the theodicy. The idea that evil came from perfection makes no sense whatsoever. Also, the idea that Hell was part of the created order is inconsistent with a perfect world and the nature of an omnibenevolent God. This lack of rational thought means the theodicy is irrelevant in the 21st Century.
- Another line of reasoning could be that there is a contradiction of the created order becoming chaotic. This seems to undermine all geological scientific records and biological evidence. Geology sees the nature of the world as chaotic and unpredictable even today. For example, with earthquakes etc. Many geologists would certainly deny a movement from the initial state of perfection.
- It also makes logical sense (hence it fits with today's worldview) that evil is not a substance, it is not 'a thing' in itself; it is merely the absence of good. It is a most relevant concept to say that there is a gap between what there is and what there ought to be in the behaviour of humans and in acts of nature. Therefore, the theodicy is still relevant.
- The theodicy is relevant when it gives humans responsibility for sinning as we see this at work in our justice system today. Hence the 'workings' of the theodicy tally with modern expectations.
- Candidates may also argue that the Augustinian type theodicy forms the basis of sound Christian doctrine and is therefore still relevant today.
- Candidates may use Irenaean type theodicies as an example of theodicies that are more relevant in the 21st Century compared to the Augustinian type theodicy as a line of reasoning.

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

4. (a) **Examine the different versions of the ontological argument as presented by Descartes and Malcolm.** [30]

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

- The ontological is an a priori argument which uses deductive reasoning to prove God's existence – not dependent on evidence or experience.
- Candidates may refer to St Anselm, but credit should only be given to responses that highlight the nature of ontological arguments as a priori through doing this. Credit for the contribution of scholars should be limited to Descartes and Malcolm only.

Descartes

- Descartes saw the ontological argument as deductive and 'a priori', based on theoretical deduction rather than observation or experience.
- For Descartes, existence is a predicate of God.
- Descartes argued that as he could conceive of his own existence, he could also conceive of the existence of the perfect being. Descartes famously quoted 'I think, therefore I am'. He was certain of his own existence.
- Descartes offered his own form of the argument; he defined God as the supremely perfect being, who has all perfections such as omnipotent, omnibenevolence etc. Existence is a perfection. Therefore God, a supremely being, exists.
- In 'Meditation 5', Descartes argued that there were some qualities that an object necessarily has or else it would not be that object. Therefore, existence cannot be separated from the concept of God.
- Descartes demonstrated that necessary existence cannot be separated from God any more than three angles can be separated from the idea of a triangle. Three angles are intrinsic to the definition of a triangle (without 3 angles it is not a triangle by definition) just as necessary existence is intrinsic to God.
- He also used the analogy of mountains and valleys. Existence can no more be separated from the essence God than the idea of a mountain can be separated from a valley. It would be a contradiction to conceive a mountain without there being a valley. Similarly, it would be a contradiction to think of God, a supremely perfect being, without one perfection – necessary existence.

Malcolm

- Malcolm focuses his argument on necessary existence. He saw Anselm's argument in Proslogion 2 as inadequate.
- He focused on God as an absolutely unlimited being (his definition of God) and saw his arguments as a development of those found in Anselm's Proslogion 3 which argues for the logical impossibility of God's non-existence.
- Malcolm's argument states that the nature of an unlimited being is one that of something which is either impossible or necessary. If God is an unlimited being, he can neither come into existence or cease to exist because that suggests he is a limited being which, by definition, he is not. If the idea of an unlimited being is not self-contradictory then God necessarily exists.

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

- (b) **‘The challenges to the ontological argument for God’s existence are effective.’**
Evaluate this view. [30]

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

- The ontological argument is regarded as effective because it is an ‘a priori’ argument and a deductive proof with logically inescapable conclusion. This is attractive to believers of theistic religions (e.g. Christianity), because, for them, the existence of God is self-evident. The challenges do not weaken the argument’s deductive nature.
- On the contrary, the premises of the ontological argument may not be true as they stem from medieval times and do not take account of modern science.
- Modern versions of the argument still arise such as those presented by Descartes and Malcom. This shows the ontological argument is worth pursuing, primarily because Descartes and Malcom claim it has a logically inescapable conclusion.
- Many critics challenge the argument as the ontological argument defines God into existence (e.g. Anselm). By using the same logic, we could define anything into existence that we can think of. This shows that challenges can be effective.
- Gaunilo’s challenge focuses on the view that replacing the word ‘God’ with ‘greatest island’ produces true premises, but a false conclusion. The greatest island does not necessarily exist. We can always think of a bigger or better island, but such an island cannot have an ‘intrinsic maximum.’
- Challenges such as those of Gaunilo have missed the point. Perfect islands can always have things added to them, but arguments concerning God’s characteristics are of a different nature and cannot be compared to an island (Anselm’s response) rendering Gaunilo’s challenge ineffective.
- Some may argue that Kant’s critique is effective; he argues that existence is not a real predicate because it does not tell us what an object is like. The rejection of ‘existence’ as a predicate is a very popular challenge to the ontological argument.
- Some may further develop Kant’s argument that the word ‘exist’ merely states that a concept applies to the real world. It does not actually add anything to the concept itself. A mountain would have the same essential properties of a ‘mountain’ whether it existed or not.
- Therefore, the philosophical ‘truth’ contains nothing beyond the logical necessity of its definition.
- Kant used the example of the idea of 100 thalers and 100 real thalers actually existing. The existing thalers contain no more value. Likewise, a triangle must have three angles **if** it exists but this is conditional on it existing in the first place.
- In the same way, it would therefore not be a contradiction to reject existence as a predicate for God. Existence is not a logical necessity.
- Despite the challenges, most people who believe in The God of Classical Theism would accept Anselm’s definition of God as “a being than which nothing greater can be conceived.”

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