



GCSE MARKING SCHEME

SUMMER 2025

**GCSE
RELIGIOUS STUDIES
UNIT 3: CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY AND ETHICAL THEMES
3121U30-1**

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.

WJEC GCSE RELIGIOUS STUDIES – UNIT 3
CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY AND ETHICAL THEMES
SUMMER 2025 MARK SCHEME

General Marking Instructions for Examiners

The mark scheme defines what can be reasonably expected of a candidate in response to questions asked.

1. 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.

2. Banded mark schemes

Banded mark schemes are divided so that each band has a relevant descriptor. The descriptor for the band provides a description of the performance level for that band. Each band contains a range of marks.

3. Two-mark questions

Banded mark schemes are not suitable for low tariff questions. Instructions for the awarding of marks are given with the indicative content.

Using the banded mark scheme

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. 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.

Stage 2 – Deciding on the mark

Once the band has been decided, examiners can then assign a mark. During standardising (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.

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 candidate need not cover all of the points mentioned in the indicative content but must meet the requirements of the highest mark band.** Where a response is not creditworthy, that is contains nothing of any significance to the mark scheme, or where no response has been provided, no marks should be awarded.

For questions which require candidates to consider two separate aspects, if the candidate only considers one, marking using the banded descriptions and then halve the mark.

Assessment Objectives

The questions test the candidate's ability to:

- AO1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief*, including:
 - belief, practices and sources of authority
 - influence on individuals, communities and societies
 - similarities and differences within and/or between religions and belief
- AO2 Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief*, including their significance and influence

* The term 'belief' includes religious and non-religious belief as appropriate to the subject content requirements.

LEVEL DESCRIPTORS/MARKING BANDS

Questions 1, 2, 3, 4(a) AO1

See instructions provided with indicative content.

Question 1, 2, 3 and 4(b) AO1

Band	Band Descriptor	Mark Total
3	An excellent, coherent description showing awareness and insight into the religious idea, belief, practice, teaching or concept. Uses a range of appropriate religious/specialist language and terms and, where relevant, sources of wisdom and authority, extensively, accurately and appropriately.	4–5
2	A good, generally accurate description showing awareness and understanding of the religious idea, belief, practice, teaching or concept. Uses religious/specialist language and terms and, where relevant, sources of wisdom and authority generally accurately.	2–3
1	A limited statement of information about the religious idea, belief, practice, teaching or concept. Uses religious/specialist language and terms and, where relevant, sources of wisdom and authority in a limited way.	1
0	No relevant information provided.	0

Questions 1, 2, 3 and 4(c) AO1

Band	Band Descriptor	Mark Total
4	An excellent, highly detailed explanation showing awareness and insight into the religious idea, belief, practice, teaching or concept. Uses a range of religious/specialist language, terms and sources of wisdom and authority extensively, accurately and appropriately.	7–8
3	A very good, explanation showing awareness of the religious idea, belief, practice, teaching or concept. Uses a range of religious/specialist language, terms and sources of wisdom and authority accurately and appropriately.	5–6
2	A satisfactory explanation showing some awareness of the religious idea, belief, practice, teaching or concept. Uses religious/specialist language, terms and/or sources of wisdom and authority with some accuracy.	3–4
1	A limited explanation showing little awareness of the religious idea, belief, practice, teaching or concept. Uses religious/specialist language, terms and/or sources of wisdom and authority in a limited way and with little accuracy.	1–2
0	No relevant information provided.	0

Questions 1, 2, 3 and 4(d) AO2

Band	Band Descriptor	Mark Total
4	An excellent, highly detailed analysis and evaluation of the issue based on comprehensive and accurate knowledge of religion, religious teaching and moral reasoning. Clear and well supported judgements are formulated and a comprehensive range of different and/or alternative viewpoints are considered. Uses and interprets religious/specialist language, terms and sources of wisdom and authority extensively, accurately, appropriately and in detail.	12–15
3	A very good, detailed analysis and evaluation of the issue based on thorough and accurate knowledge of religion, religious teaching and moral reasoning. Judgements are formulated with support and a balanced range of different and/or alternative viewpoints are considered. Uses and interprets religious/specialist language, terms and sources of wisdom and authority accurately, appropriately and in detail.	8–11
2	A satisfactory analysis and evaluation of the issue based on some accurate knowledge of religion, religious teaching and moral reasoning. Some judgements are formulated and some different and/or alternative viewpoints are considered. Uses and interprets some religious/specialist language, terms and/or sources of wisdom and authority with some accuracy.	4–7
1	A weak analysis and evaluation of the issue based on limited and/or inaccurate knowledge of religion, religious teaching and/or moral reasoning. A limited and/or poor attempt or no attempt to formulate judgements or offer different and/or alternative viewpoints. Poor use or no use of religious/specialist language, terms and/or sources of wisdom and authority.	1–3
0	No relevant point of view stated.	0

Assessment of spelling, punctuation and the accurate use of grammar
Applies to Section A, Question 1, part (d) only

Band	Performance descriptions
<i>High performance</i> 5-6 marks	• Candidates spell and punctuate with consistent accuracy • Candidates use rules of grammar with effective control of meaning overall
<i>Intermediate performance</i> 3-4 marks	• Candidates spell and punctuate with considerable accuracy • Candidates use rules of grammar with general control of meaning overall
<i>Threshold performance</i> 1-2 marks	• Candidates spell and punctuate with reasonable accuracy • Candidates use rules of grammar with some control of meaning and any errors do not significantly hinder meaning overall
0	• The candidate writes nothing • The candidate's response does not relate to the question • The candidate's achievement in SPaG does not reach the threshold performance Band, for example errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar severely hinder meaning

PART A – CORE BELIEFS TEACHINGS AND PRACTICES

CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY

QUESTION 1

Please note: the mark scheme is not a checklist. Other valid points must be credited.

For all (a) questions, credit 1 mark for a very simple definition and 2 marks for a developed definition and/or an example.

(a) What do Catholics mean by 'purgatory'? [AO1 2]

The process of being purified of sin before uniting with God in heaven.

(b) Describe what Catholics might do to celebrate Christmas. [AO1 5]

- Catholics may attend Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve or Mass on Christmas morning.
- They light the final white candle on the Advent wreath.
- They may create a Jesse Tree to remind them of Jesus' Davidic ancestry.
- They may have a Nativity set in their home where they place the figure of Jesus on Christmas morning.
- They may exchange gifts.
- They will have a family meal/celebration.
- Some Catholic families will have their home or Christmas tree blessed by their parish priest.
- They may take part in a Nativity play.
- They may attend a Carol Service.
- They may attend Mass on Epiphany.

(c) Explain the importance of a place of worship for Catholics. [AO1 8]

- It is where they can gather to worship with their community.
- There are aids to worship in a church that can make the experience more meaningful, e.g. statues of saints, stained glass windows, the altar, Stations of the Cross.
- Catholics can light a candle if they are seeking help or guidance.
- It is where they can celebrate faith and receive the sacraments.
- It is where they can ask advice from the parish priest.
- They can learn more about the liturgical year and the history of Catholic festivals.
- They can hear the priest's homily during Mass which helps them understand how to live as God wants.
- The church can also be a hub for the community where other things take place, e.g. food bank, charity collections, concerts and fetes.

(d) 'Advent is the most important time in the Church's year.'

[AO2 15+6]

Discuss this statement showing that you have considered more than one point of view. (You must refer to religion and belief in your answer.)

Marks for spelling, punctuation and the accurate use of grammar are allocated to this question.

Answers may include the following points, but other relevant and accurate points must also be credited.

- Advent is the start of the liturgical year.
- It is a time of preparation for the festival of Christmas.
- The hymns and Bible readings during Advent help Catholics to reflect on the coming of God's promised Messiah, the message of John the Baptist, and the Second Coming (Parousia) of Christ.
- The symbolism of the Advent Wreath is important during the season.
- The O Antiphons help Catholics to reflect on the titles of the Messiah.
- Advent is a time of hope, which is needed in today's world.
- There are other, more important times in the Liturgical Year, e.g. Easter.
- Christmas is more important than Advent, as we wouldn't have Advent without Christmas.
- Holy Days of Obligation are more important than Advent, as Catholics are instructed to attend Mass on these days.

PART A – CORE BELIEFS TEACHINGS AND PRACTICES

CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY

QUESTION 2

Please note: the mark scheme is not a checklist. Other valid points must be credited.

For all (a) questions, credit 1 mark for a very simple definition and 2 marks for a developed definition and/or an example.

(a) What do Catholics mean by 'Theotokos'? [AO1 2]

From Theos meaning "God" and tokos meaning 'bearer' or 'birther', the title given to the Virgin Mary, bearer of Christ.

(b) Describe the Virgin Birth stories. [AO1 5]

- In the biblical account of the Annunciation, the Angel Gabriel visits Mary to tell her she will bear a son and she is to name him Jesus.
- Mary was confused as she was a virgin, but the angel told her that the pregnancy was a result of the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Mary agreed to God's plan to bear his Son.
- She went to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who was pregnant with her first child, who would become John the Baptist. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child 'leaped in her womb' and she was filled with the Holy Spirit. (*Luke 1: 41*)
- Mary and Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem to take part in a census.
- As a result, all of the inns at Bethlehem were full and the only place to stay was a stable.
- While there, Mary gave birth to a son.
- She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger. (*Luke 2:7*)
- Matthew's Gospel tells of the visit of the Magi to the newborn child.
- They followed a star to find the child, and brought him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. These gifts were symbolic of this child being the new king.
- In Luke's Gospel, the shepherds are visited by angels who told them where to find the child.
- After they had visited him, they returned, glorifying and praising God.
- Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.
- *Luke's Gospel, chapter 1*
- *Matthew's Gospel, chapter 1.*

(c) Explain how Catholic beliefs are depicted through art. [AO1 8]

- Statues serve as reminders of key events, beliefs and individuals in church history.
- Artists often show ideas that are difficult to understand, e.g. the Trinity.
- Art can help Catholics understand the key messages of God and the scripture.
- Michelangelo's 'The Pietà' shows the suffering of Mary at Christ's crucifixion.
- The Sistine Chapel has an important piece of artwork on the ceiling which shows nine different stories from the Bible, e.g. the Creation of Adam.
- Symbols such as the Alpha and Omega help Catholics to understand ideas about God.
- Hymns are often based on words/stories from the Bible.

(d) 'Praying using rosary beads is the best way to worship God.' AO2 [15]

Discuss this statement showing that you have considered more than one point of view. (You must refer to religion and belief in your answer.)

Answers may include the following points, but other relevant and accurate points must also be credited.

- The Rosary is a traditional Catholic aid to prayer.
- Using a Rosary can help Catholics focus on their prayers.
- Catholics can meditate on the Holy Mysteries when praying the Rosary.
- Praying the Rosary is also a way to venerate Mary.
- Holding a rosary allows Catholics to fully focus on the prayer rather than counting how many they have said.
- The Lord's Prayer is the prayer taught by Jesus which is used in the Rosary.
- Many people may not have access to rosary beads, but their prayers are just as important to God.
- There are many other ways to worship God.
- Some Catholics choose to go on pilgrimage as a form of worship.
- The Stations of the Cross are an important form of prayer and meditation.
- Attending Mass is a religious duty for all Catholics. This is a better way to worship God.
- Charity work is a better way to worship God as it shows love for neighbour which is an instruction from Jesus.
- Using gifts and talents is a better way to worship God as they come from him.

PART B – RELIGIOUS RESPONSES TO ETHICAL THEMES

THEME 1: RELATIONSHIPS

QUESTION 3

Please note: the mark scheme is not a checklist. Other valid points must be credited.

For all (a) questions, credit 1 mark for a very simple definition and 2 marks for a developed definition and/or an example.

(a) What do Catholics mean by ‘commitment’? [AO1 2]

A sense of dedication and obligation to someone or something.

(b) Describe what happens in a Catholic marriage ceremony. [AO1 5]

- Welcome
- Hymns
- Readings from the Bible
- Three Questions
- Vows (the moment of the sacrament and the promises that commit the partners to lifelong marriage)
- Exchange of Rings
- Nuptial Blessing
- Signing the Register (a legal requirement in the UK)

(c) Explain the Catholic Church’s attitude to adultery. [AO1 8]

- Adultery is a serious sin against God.
- It is forbidden in the Ten Commandments.
- The prophets in the Old Testament put adultery on the same level as idolatry, e.g. Hosea 2:7, Jeremiah 5:7
- Jesus condemned not only adultery but also lustful thoughts as ‘adultery of the heart’ (Matthew 5: 27-28)
- The Catholic Church is against adultery.
- Adultery is wrong because marriage is sexually exclusive and shouldn’t be shared with anyone else.
- Marriage is a sacrament – a gift from God – and adultery goes against this.
- Adultery breaks the vows the couple made to each other and to God when they got married.
- Committing adultery destroys the special relationship between a husband and wife.
- Committing adultery can harm the family unit and cause the partner to feel cheated and betrayed.

(d) **'It is difficult for a Catholic to be married to a non-Catholic.'**

[AO2 15]

Discuss this statement showing that you have considered more than one point of view. (You must refer to religion and belief in your answer.)

Answers may include the following points, but other relevant and accurate points must also be credited.

- As long as the two people love each other, it won't be too difficult.
- Marriage between a Catholic and a baptised Christian won't be too difficult as long as they communicate well.
- They will need to find the things they have in common from their faith backgrounds.
- The couple may disagree over issues such as contraception or abortion.
- It may be difficult to worship together as a family unit.
- The Catholic Church insists that any children must be brought up as Catholic. This may cause a problem for the non-Catholic.
- A special dispensation is required from the Church if a Catholic wishes to marry someone of another religious faith.
- It may be difficult if the believers need to follow different dietary rules within the home.
- It may be difficult to know what to teach children within the home about issues such as life after death.
- The couple may not have the support they need from their families or religious communities. This can be very difficult.
- There may be different expectations of gender roles.

PART B – RELIGIOUS RESPONSES TO ETHICAL THEMES

THEME 2: HUMAN RIGHTS

QUESTION 4

Please note: the mark scheme is not a checklist. Other valid points must be credited.

For all (a) questions, credit 1 mark for a very simple definition and 2 marks for a developed definition and/or an example.

(a) What do Catholics mean by ‘censorship’? [AO1 2]

The practice of suppressing and limiting access to materials considered obscene, offensive or a threat to security. People may also be restricted in their speech by censorship laws.

(b) Describe Catholic teachings on the equality of women and men. [AO1 5]

- The belief that all human life has dignity is important for Catholics.
- Each life, irrespective of age, gender or ability, is of worth and value and should be treated with respect.
- All people are created in God’s image (Imago Dei).
- The characteristics of God are reflected in all human beings and so each individual has worth and value.
- Life is a gift from God and is therefore holy and should be valued and preserved.
- Catholic Social Teaching
- *Genesis 1:27 – ‘So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.’*
- *Galatians 3:28 – ‘There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.’*

(c) Explain Catholic views about wealth.

[AO1 8]

- Catholics believe that a person's value should be judged by their actions, and not by what they possess or how much money they have.
- Having wealth is not bad or wrong, but there are ethical considerations about how Catholics use their wealth.
- There are no rules to state whether certain jobs should be allowed, but Catholics are expected to ask themselves if the job is exploiting or helping people.
- Many Catholics are against gambling because it encourages a love of money. They also believe that gambling and lotteries encourage or are driven by greed.
- In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus warns his disciples that money can take the place of God in their lives and that they must be careful to remain faithful to him.
- In the parable of the Rich Man, a rich young ruler wanted to follow Jesus, and was told to sell his possessions and give the money to the poor.
- Jesus said in this parable that it is 'easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.'
- All of the Gospels taught that Jesus wanted his followers to care for the poor.
- The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-30) explains that wealth itself has no benefit in the afterlife, it's how wealth is used in this life that matters.
- In the story of the widow's offering, Jesus makes it clear that it is not the amount of money or wealth that people donate and give away, but rather the value of the money given away. The widow gave all she had, which meant more than the huge amounts that the rich men had given.
- *Mark 12:43-44*
- *Luke 16:19-30.*

(d) 'Catholics should do more to promote human rights.'

AO2 [15]

Discuss this statement showing that you have considered more than one point of view. (You must refer to religion and belief in your answer.)

Answers may include the following points, but other relevant and accurate points must also be credited.

- Catholics already do a great deal of work to promote human rights.
- CAFOD is a Catholic charity working across the world for human rights.
- Missio is the Pope's chosen charity that works for human rights.
- There is a long history of Catholics speaking out for human rights, e.g. Maximilian Kolbe.
- Catholics teach equality for all.
- *Dignitatis Humanae* is a Church document which focuses on the rights of the person.
- Jesus always stood up for those who were on the margins of society. Catholics try to follow this example.
- Catholic Social Teaching encourages equality and dignity for all.
- Catholic Association for Racial Justice
- The Mass encourages community and union for all.
- There will always be more that needs to be done.
- Until all people are living equally and issues like poverty and discrimination are eliminated, Catholics will need to continue working to improve human rights.
- Catholic schools need to ensure that human rights are taught as part of the curriculum.