



GCE AS MARKING SCHEME

SUMMER 2023

**AS
RELIGIOUS STUDIES - COMPONENT 1
OPTION C: AN INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM**

B120UC0-1

INTRODUCTION

This marking scheme was used by WJEC for the 2023 examination. It was finalised after detailed discussion at examiners' conferences by all the examiners involved in the assessment. The conference was held shortly after the paper was taken so that reference could be made to the full range of candidates' responses, with photocopied scripts forming the basis of discussion. The aim of the conference was to ensure that the marking scheme was interpreted and applied in the same way by all examiners.

It is hoped that this information will be of assistance to centres but it is recognised at the same time that, without the benefit of participation in the examiners' conference, teachers may have different views on certain matters of detail or interpretation.

WJEC regrets that it cannot enter into any discussion or correspondence about this marking scheme.

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 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.

Examiners should not seek to mark candidates down as a result of small omissions in minor areas of an answer.

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	<p style="text-align: center;">Assessment Objective AO1 – Part (a) questions 25 marks</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <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	<p style="text-align: center;">21-25 marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 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 and vocabulary in context.
4	<p style="text-align: center;">16-20 marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 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.
3	<p style="text-align: center;">11-15 marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 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.
2	<p style="text-align: center;">6-10 marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • 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.
1	<p style="text-align: center;">1-5 marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • 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. <p>N.B. A maximum of 2 marks should be awarded for a response that only demonstrates 'knowledge in isolation'</p>
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No relevant information.

Band	Assessment Objective AO2- Part (b) questions 25 marks <i>Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.</i>
5	21-25 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confident critical analysis and perceptive evaluation of the issue. • A response that successfully identifies and thoroughly addresses the issues raised by the question set. • 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.
4	16-20 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
3	11-15 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfactory analysis and relevant evaluation of the issue. • Most of the issues raised by the question are identified successfully and have generally been addressed. • Most of the views given are satisfactorily supported by reasoning and/or evidence. • Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
2	6-10 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some valid analysis and inconsistent evaluation of the issue. • A limited number of issues raised by the question set are identified and partially addressed. • 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.
1	1-5 marks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Little attempt to justify a view with reasoning or evidence. • Some use of basic specialist language and vocabulary.
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No relevant analysis or evaluation.

GCE AS RELIGIOUS STUDIES – COMPONENT 1

OPTION C: AN INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM

SUMMER 2023 MARK SCHEME

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

Section A

1. (a) **Explain how the content and nature of the Shema reinforces the covenant relationship.** [AO1 25]

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

- The Shema is an affirmation of Judaism and a declaration of faith in one God.
- It is made up of three paragraphs from the Torah; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21, and Numbers 15:37-41.
- The word 'Shema' means 'hear'. It is taken from the book of Deuteronomy when Moses retells the story of the journey through the desert. 'Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God, the Lord is One'. This is seen as a declaration of faith that is central to Judaism and underlines the belief that there is One God that demands obedience from the people.
- The prayer was developed as a summary of Jewish law and belief.
- The obligation to recite the Shema is separate from prayer and a Jew must recite the Shema at morning and at night.
- It is seen as a communal prayer, where the community declare their responsibilities to God.
- The first line of the Shema 'Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One' [Deuteronomy 6:4] is repeated through prayer services, is said during morning blessings, during Shabbat and holidays, when the Torah is taken out of the Ark, as a bedtime prayer and death bed confession.
- The Shema is the first prayer Jewish children learn and this emphasises the role education plays in the spiritual development of children.
- Part 1 – The prayer begins with the declaration that there is only One God. It discusses the need for commandments and the role they play in life. They should be taught to children and are reminded of them when the tefillin are worn and by the mezuzot on the doorposts.
- Part 2 – The second part of the Shema is a declaration that the Jews are prepared to accept the commandments as proof of loyalty to God. It repeats many of the same themes as the first section but reminds Jews of the role their behaviour could make in the world and discusses rewards and punishments.
- Part 3 – The final section discusses actions. These include wearing tzitzit [fringes] that are worn on the tallit [prayer shawl]. It also discusses the Exodus and is a reminder of the commandments.
- Expect some discussion on the mezuzah, Tzitzit, Tefillin and Tallit

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

(b) 'The Shema does not contain the most important Jewish beliefs.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 25]

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

- A strong argument is that the Shema is one of the first thing a Jewish child learns and therefore it is fundamental to the faith as this emphasises the whole essence of the faith. It is taught by parents, emphasising the importance of passing the payer on to the next generation which underlines its importance.
- Another line of reasoning is that the Shema was developed as a way of summarising all Jewish law and is the central focus of Jewish worship. It is a declaration of faith that is central to Judaism that emphasises that God demands obedience from his people.
- The Shema also includes reference to the Exodus from Egypt and therefore reference to the commandments that God gave to them and therefore a daily reminder to Jews.
- Another argument to be considered is as it is required to be recited every morning and evening and during worship and therefore consideration of the main beliefs within Judaism is made and therefore shows that the most important beliefs within Judaism are included.
- Devout Jews hope to recite the Shema at death. If the Shema did not include the fundamental Jewish beliefs then this would not be the case and another phrase or prayer would be chosen.
- One line of argument could include the way in which the Shema is used frequently. The Mezuzah and Tefillin for instance are used frequently and both are related to the Shema. If the key Jewish beliefs were not included in these practices, they would not have so much relevance and such a role to play within Jewish life.
- However, one argument could include the view that what constitutes an important belief is open to personal interpretation. For individual Jews, other aspects of the faith could be of equal or greater importance. Although the Shema contains many aspects of the faith that are required to be kept as part of the covenant with God, it should also be considered that for difference branches of Judaism, different aspects of the faith have more or less relevance.
- Reference could be made to the importance of the Tenakh within Judaism and how this has reference to all aspects of Jewish life and therefore this contains all of the most important Jewish beliefs not only a declaration of faith.

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

2. (a) Outline Jewish beliefs regarding death and the resurrection of the dead.
[AO1 25]

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

- There is no theological significance to death in Judaism other than it is part of God's plan for humanity.
- Funeral practices and mourning express more about remembering the dead and comforting the living than focusing on what will happen after death.
- The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead appears in Jewish eschatology and is associated with what will happen in the Messianic Age when the dead will rise to live again.
- There are only two biblical references to the resurrection of the dead. (Isaiah 26:19 and Daniel 12:2. Some scholars have suggested that these were included later and therefore influenced by Persian thought.
- The book of Daniel doesn't mention the term Messiah but the term 'son of man' has been claimed to have the same connotations which refers to a future figure whose coming will mean the end of history and bring about God's judgment.
- According to the book of Daniel, God's kingdom will be preceded by a time of great trouble. Those who have been faithful to God will be rescued. At this time, there will be a resurrection of the dead, when God will judge each soul and determine where each will spend eternity.
- The doctrine of resurrection has been a subject of debate within Judaism. In Maimonides' thirteenth principle, he claims that the resurrection of the dead is one of the foundations of belief. However, other references show that he believed in the resurrection of the immortal soul and not of the body. This is in contrast to other statements within rabbinic literature that say that the dead will be resurrected wearing their clothes.
- Another debate is centred around timings for resurrection with the Midrash claiming that the humble will be raised first.
- There is also a belief amongst some that those who are buried in Israel will be the first to raised.
- Orthodox Jews maintain a belief in the resurrection and make reference to this in daily prayer and funerals, especially the kaddish. It is the resurrection of the body that is accepted, and as a result many Jews object to cremation.
- Reform Jews reject the doctrine of the resurrection of the body in favour of the immortality of the soul.

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

(b) 'Jewish beliefs about the afterlife are not relevant for Jews today.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 25]

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

- It could be argued as there is not one universal Jewish belief about the afterlife it cannot have any bearing on behaviour.
- It could also be argued that Jews should adhere to the mitzvot and keep the terms of the covenant in order to follow the religion correctly and not in order to secure a better afterlife.
- Another argument could include the ideas, as there is a doctrine regarding the afterlife this should influence behaviour.
- Jews generally believe that it is far more important to focus on what is happening during life rather than being concerned about what might happen in the afterlife. The Mishnah makes reference to this and it is believed that Jews should serve God out of love of truth.
- It could also be argued that the concept of judgement and the afterlife can be found in Hebrew scriptures and reference is made to the time when God will judge every soul and determine where each will spend eternity.
- Also, the Torah presents Jews with the notion of a God who punishes the bad and rewards the good according to the way in which each has responded to the commandments given to Moses. It would therefore follow, that this could mean that both judgement and the afterlife would be of importance when deciding how to behave.
- It could be argued that the concept of judgment is more relevant when discussing Jewish behaviour today rather than what happens in the afterlife, as many believe that God will reward the good and punish the sinners in this life as well as the next. This is evident during Yom Kippur when the people stand before God and confess their sins before God makes a final judgement on each individual's fate for the coming year. It is a festival at which Jews who do not normally go to the synagogue throughout the year are present, which shows its influence on behaviour.
- Another conclusion could possibly be that it is not the specific details of belief about judgement and the afterlife that are critical for Jews but the general view of hope for the future establishment of God's kingdom through the Messianic age is the main focus of attention and therefore governs behaviour and adherence to the tenets of faith.

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

Section B

3. (a) Explain the importance of tzedakah (charity) within Judaism with reference to Maimonides and the 'ladder of tzedakah'. [AO1 25]

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

- The term tzedakah is usually translated as charity; however its literal meaning is 'justice' or 'righteousness'. When a Jewish person carries out a charitable act, they are undertaking on the most basic requirements of the mitzvot; providing for those who cannot provide for themselves.
- Charitable acts are more than just showing kindness by making a donation to a worthy cause; they are considered to be right actions which are just as important as any other mitzvot.
- One of the ways in which a Jewish person can give to charity on a regular basis is through a regular contribution (tenth of their income after taxes). Judaism sees this act as attempting to readdress the balance between those who are fortunate and those who are not.
- Judaism teaches that every person has an obligation to avoid becoming in need of charity and should try to work to support themselves. However, Judaism is realistic and realises that hardship does occur. It is therefore wrong to refuse help when it is offered.
- It is also important to give one's time to help others in need, not only contributing financially. This is called gemilut hasadim. 'the giving of loving kindness' and is about doing good deeds. It can be seen as being carried out in the form of looking after others in the community. It can be done by anyone and is done without expecting anything in return. It has been said that the highest level of gemilut hasadim is attending a funeral service to show respect as a person who has died is not able to repay the kindness.
- Such is the importance of charity is also evident in the fact that Jews often have pushkes, collection boxes in the house.
- Maimonides identified eight stages of tzedakah with each one being higher than the one before. This has become known as the 'ladder of tzedakah' and beginning with the lowest level, each step climbed brings a person closer to the ideal.
- Maimonides pointed out that it is far better to lend someone money to start their own business than to give alms. In order to avoid awkwardness it can be regarded as an indefinite loan where the lender does not seriously expect the loan to be repaid.
- Maimonides highlights the fact that, not only are Jews commanded to provide help when needed, but also that the dignity of the recipient should be considered.
- Candidates are not expected to list all of the stages of Maimonides' ladder.

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

(b) 'Tzedakah is the most important belief within Judaism.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 25]

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

- When a Jewish person carries out a charitable act, they are undertaking one of the most basic requirements of the mitzvot, to provide for those who are unable to provide for themselves. Therefore, the charitable act is more than just showing kindness by making a donation, they are considered right actions which are just as important as any other mitzvot.
- It can be argued that when a Jew gives to charity the act is seen as moving towards readdressing the balance between those who are fortunate and those who are not.
- Also, tzedakah is not only about giving money to worthy causes, it is important to show kindness and mercy to those who are in difficulties and who need support such as giving one's time. Jews are also commanded to ensure that they respect the dignity of those who need help as discussed in Leviticus 19:9, this highlights the importance of the concept of tzedakah and the effect this could have on a person's life.
- It could also be argued that tzedakah is of great importance as it features in many aspects of life, during festivals such as Purim when food is given to ensure no one is left without. Gemilut hasadim is encouraged at all times also.
- Maimonides 'ladder of tzedakah' clearly shows the importance of the beliefs in tzedakah within Judaism.
- However, another line of reasoning could include the idea that other beliefs are of greater importance such as keeping all of the mitzvot, the importance of Torah study or the beliefs about judgement and the afterlife.
- It could also be argued that the Amidah as the encapsulation of the most important beliefs, values and teachings is of the highest importance rather than tzedakah as this encompasses all Jewish beliefs rather than one concept.
- In addition, beliefs in judgement and the afterlife could also be of greater importance as these beliefs impact all behaviour and would automatically therefore include tzedakah.

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

4. (a) **Explain the main rituals associated with Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah.** [AO1 25]

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

Yom Kippur

- On the eve of Yom Kippur, there is a special meal. It is a very festive event that is followed in contrast by a 25 hour fast.
- As well as abstaining from food and drink, Jews will refrain from bathing in a luxurious way, using perfume, having sex and wearing leather shoes.
- The spiritual benefits of the fast outweigh the difficulties. The fast has been interpreted in a number of ways. For example, the discomfort someone feels during the fast atones for sins committed that has not been atoned for in another way. Also, the point of the fast is not to punish, but to take someone's mind off physical needs so that they are able to concentrate on the spiritual.
- Fasting can also show that a person is sincere when asking for forgiveness. It also encourages self-discipline, which is needed in the new year when thinking about the resolutions that need to be kept.
- After the meal, before prayers, many Jews change clothing. Many wear a white garment called kittel. It symbolised purity and repentance. The women wear white dresses, and gold jewellery is removed.
- Many consider Yom Kippur the holiest of festivals as a result many Jews who are not regular worshippers attend synagogue.
- It is important as it is a day where each person has the opportunity to make themselves right with God by repenting their bad deeds.
- Five services are held in the synagogue, the white kittel is worn.
- The opening services is called Kol Nidrei, named after the section of the liturgy chanted during the service. It takes the form of a statement of vows.
- Morning service is followed by Musaf, an additional service that includes an account of the Temple.
- The day's worship concludes with Neilah and when nightfall comes, there is a single blast on the shofar that announces that the fast is over. At home, the Havdalah is performed.

Rosh Hashanah

- It is traditional to wear white, and this comes from the belief that it is the Day of Judgement, Jews wish to present themselves before God as being clean of sin.
- At the synagogue, the covers of the bimah, ark and lectern are draped in white.
- It starts with prayers in the synagogue in the evening, and the prayer book - machzor takes place of the siddur. It is important as it offers additional prayers that focus on themes of malkhiyot (kingship), zikhronot (remembrances) and shofarot (shofar blasts). They emphasise the sovereignty of God; a Kingship of the world. It includes asking God to remember humankind, as well as reminding Jews that they must not forget what God has done for them.
- The Amidah is recited with amendments including references to God's kingship.
- On leaving the synagogue, Jews bless each other with 'May you be written down for a good year'.

- The high point of the festival is blowing the shofar, 100 notes as opposed to the few notes during the month before Rosh Hashanah.
- It is customary to have round challot, to represent the crown, reflecting the coronation of God as king of the world.
- It is another custom to eat new fruit, usually a pomegranate due to its 613 seeds just as there are 613 mitzvot and as a reflection of the hope of as many good deeds.
- Many communities observe tashlikh (literally meaning 'to cast') which involves the symbolic casting away of sins by throwing pieces of bread into flowing water.
- Many Jews also shake their clothing to empty pockets of crumbs thus casting away any traces of sins.
- Reference could also be made to the significance of the shofar as well as any relevant reference to the services.

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

- (b) **‘Acknowledgement of sins and penitence should happen regularly, not only during Yom Kippur.’**

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 25]

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

- Only line of reasoning could include the idea that atonement and repentance are at the centre of Jewish spiritual life therefore it is a regular feature not only during Yom Kippur.
- However, during Yom Kippur, time is made to reflect specifically about sins, and are given the opportunity to repent specifically during this time and this could lead to a greater focus given to one's sins.
- It could also be argued that the focus on sins and penitence serves to bring a person closer to God so regular awareness of sins could be better than a once a year event.
- Also, acknowledgement of sins and the penitence that follows is a way of developing a sense of godliness.
- Some could also argue that acknowledgement of sins is an admission of failure in spiritual development, rather than a good habit to cultivate in order to maintain an attachment to God which allows a person to have God always at the forefront of their mind in whatever they are doing.
- Some would argue that not acknowledging one's sins and a lack of regret would be considered a failure in spiritual development.
- A line of reasoning could include reference to the term 'regularly'. It could be considered as meaningless if there was never any true intention to pay anything other than lip service to the acknowledgement of sin. And if penitence were not truly sought after then that might be considered pointless to acknowledge sins regularly.
- However, the purpose of regular acknowledgment of sins and practices associated with penitence helps develop humility within a follower of Judaism and enables the individual to maintain the covenant relationship with God. This therefore would lead to enhanced spiritual development.
- It could also be argued that regular atonement would lead a person to think regularly about behaviour and adjust inappropriate behaviour accordingly rather than allowing poor choices to build and to be dealt with once a year.

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

5. (a) Describe the practices associated with brit milah (circumcision).
[AO1 25]

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

- According to the Torah, Abraham was commanded by God to circumcise himself, all male members of his household as well as his descendants.
- The circumcision was the sign of the covenant relationship between God and the 'chosen people'.
- Reference could be made to Genesis 17
- Circumcision was a common procedure at the time of Abraham, and widely practised in the Near East, however Abraham was given a specific reason for carrying out the procedure – circumcision was an outward, physical sign of the covenant between God and the Jewish people.
- The Torah also says that any un-circumcised male will be cut off from his people.
- Abraham was circumcised at 99 years old.
- Ceremony of brit milah is practised amongst Jews today, and is an important family event for the family of a Jewish son as it gives them historical links with the past.
- The ceremony is carried out by a qualified mohel (a female is called a mohelet – orthodox Jews do not allow a woman to serve in this role), on the eighth day after birth if the child is well enough.
- There are no rules governing the location, but traditionally it is held in a synagogue during morning services. It is also possible to hold the ceremony in the home.
- During the ceremony, the baby's grandparent will usually carry the child into the room and hands him to the sandek, the person who holds the baby during the procedure. Before the circumcision, the mohel recites a blessing.
- The mohel takes a cup of wine and recites a prayer for the infant while he receives his Hebrew name. A drop of two is placed in the baby's mouth, and traditionally, the father drinks some of the wine before giving the remainder to the mother. Historically, the mother is not in the room for the circumcision, however, today many unorthodox women witness the ceremony.
- The ceremony is usually celebrated with a family meal.
- Many customs associated with the brit milah such as Shalom Zakhar, a festive meal the Friday night before the brit, having a minyan present and setting aside a chair for the prophet Elijah.
- The brit has greater significance for Jews than being merely a physical operation. It can be seen by many as the act which makes one a member of the Jewish community. The act of consecration which signifies that the individual is under divine authority and subject to God's commandments.
- It is restricted to males, as in Jewish tradition it is the male Jew who is obliged to remember and transmit the faith to his descendants. He is therefore ever to be reminded, by the sign on his body, of duties to God.
- It is so important that not carrying out this particular term of the covenant would signify in some forms of Judaism that the un-circumcised would no longer be considered to be part of the covenant community.

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

(b) 'Brit milah as the sign of the covenant is unnecessary today.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 25]

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

- Of all the commandments in Judaism, the brit milah is probably the most universally observed. Even the most secular of Jews, who observe no other part of Judaism nearly always, observe the brit milah.
- One line of reasoning could include the idea that circumcision was a common practice amongst many people and therefore not unusual, and only took on a spiritual element following the covenant with Abraham and is therefore performed as tradition.
- Another argument could include the idea that as God commanded circumcision as a sign of the covenant, its purpose should never be questioned.
- It could also be argued that the continued use of brit milah as a sign of the covenant provides a strong link to the past, a distinctive feature of Judaism which sets them apart from other nations and therefore continuing their role as the chosen people.
- One argument could discuss the idea that being circumcised is not a condition of being Jewish, and therefore this should not be viewed as an essential element of the covenant. A boy is Jewish through his mother, therefore circumcision is not necessary as a sign of identity.
- Two of the great strengths of Judaism are its rationality and commitment to learning and scholarship. Another is the tradition of gemilut chasidim, acts of loving kindness, and prohibition of deliberately causing pain. Therefore, circumcision would possibly go against this idea.
- One, of the main arguments against the statement is that brit milah is seen as an integral lifecycle event and a fundamental sign of the Abrahamic covenant.
- Also, the ability to rationalise the practice is limited today, but despite this, even the most secular Jews, it remains one of the hardest rituals to relinquish.

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