



GCE MARKING SCHEME

SUMMER 2025

**AS (NEW)
RELIGIOUS STUDIES - UNIT 2
SECTION A - AN INTRODUCTION TO RELIGION
AND ETHICS**

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 A: AN INTRODUCTION TO RELIGION AND ETHICS

SUMMER 2025 MARK SCHEME

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

1. (a) Apply **either** Bentham's Act **or** Mill's Rule Utilitarianism to the issue of experimenting on animals for medical research. [30]

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

- As both forms of Utilitarianism are complex and can be applied in different ways to this issue, accept all reasonable applications by candidates.
- The Utilitarian response to this issue is centred around the idea that a good action will promote 'the greatest happiness for the greatest number.'
- Candidates may raise general utilitarian points such as the fact that animal experimentation relies upon the suffering of a few animals for the benefit of a larger number of humans and therefore could lead to greater overall happiness.
- They may identify positive advances in medicine which have been based on animal experimentation and point to the fact that it is still used effectively in this way.
- However, they may also point out that benefits of animal experimentation are not guaranteed, as animals are not exactly like humans and some argue that alternative research methods such as computer modelling, and human tissue research are more effective and may lead to greatest happiness.
- In order to apply Bentham's Utilitarianism to this issue, each example of animal experimentation must be judged in terms of the Hedonic Calculus. The criteria of intensity, duration, certainty, richness, remoteness, purity and extent must be considered, with a clear focus on the long-term effects as well as the short term.
- When asked to whom the greatest happiness principle should apply, Bentham's response was to consider 'not, can they reason...But can they suffer?' and, as such, it is clear that animals should be considered in the application of the hedonic calculus.
- In many situations, this may well lead to the acceptance of animal experimentation, in spite of the uncertainty of the outcomes.
- In terms of Mill's Utilitarianism, the quality of happiness would also be considered. As animals have a lesser capacity to experience higher level pleasures, they have a lower moral standing than humans. Mill did, however, argue that animals should have some degree of protection under the law.
- It may be, then, that Rule Utilitarianism would be likely to support limited animal experimentation for medical research but would be likely to argue for rules which minimise the suffering and make provision for the welfare of the animals involved as far as possible. The current law in the UK may well be seen to meet these conditions.

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

1. (b) 'Pleasure is the only intrinsic good.'
Evaluate this view.

[30]

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

- Utilitarianism is based on maximising pleasure and minimising pain, deriving this from the hedonist approach which values pleasure as the basis for morality.
- All humans ultimately value pleasure and therefore basing morality on pleasure means that a moral action is one that fulfils human nature, suggesting that pleasure is the only intrinsic good.
- However, some may argue that this makes humans little better than swine and is a reductionist view of morality.
- In order to counter this view, Mill's focus on the quality rather than the quantity of pleasure could be considered here. If 'pleasure' is understood in terms of higher, intellectual pleasures, then this could be seen as intrinsically good as it contributes towards the development of both the individual and of society along the lines of Aristotle's concept of eudaimonia.
- Another line of argument is that pleasure is subjective and therefore an inadequate basis for morality. To develop this argument, alternative applications of the criteria of the hedonic calculus to a particular issue could be used.
- Along similar lines, it could be argued that it is impossible to quantify pleasure in any meaningful way, and that the hedonic calculus does not really help to objectively measure pleasure in real life situations. It is hard to argue for something so subjective to be the only intrinsic good.
- Alternatively, it could be claimed that the hedonic calculus does offer a meaningful way of weighing up which actions are moral and that the answers derived from this process fit in with our general moral intuitions, making it a genuine basis for morality.
- Bentham distinguished between what one 'thinks' is right (bring most pleasure) and what 'really will' be right based on his calculations and the greatest happiness principle which has regard for others.
- However, examples could be given in which the action which produces 'the greatest happiness for the greatest number' could produce injustice or immorality.
- It could be argued that basing morality on pleasure will always lead to a relativist approach to morality, and that actually humans require moral absolutes to form the true basis for morality.
- Candidates may choose to argue that 'pleasure' needs to be defined more clearly or qualified in order to form the basis for morality. They may argue for an alternative form of utilitarianism such as rule utilitarianism or preference utilitarianism in making their case.
- Candidates may also choose to argue in favour of one of the other ethical theories studied: natural law or situation ethics, as forming a better basis for establishing what, if anything, can be considered as an intrinsic good.

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

2. (a) Apply Aquinas' Natural Law to the issue of abortion.

[30]

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

- Aquinas' Natural Law states that a good action is one that fulfils the purpose of the agent. Therefore, in order to apply Aquinas' Natural Law to ethical issues, it is important to consider the purpose of a human being.
- Aquinas claimed that the ultimate purpose of a human being was to develop into the image of God and re-establish a right relationship with God. This could only be done fully in heaven but could be worked towards while on Earth.
- The purpose of human beings on Earth are expressed in the Primary Precepts: preservation of life, living in an ordered society, worship God, educate the young and reproduce. A good action works towards these precepts.
- When applying Aquinas' Natural Law, it is necessary to decide whether an action works to support the primary precepts (a real good) or whether it takes humans away from their purpose (an apparent good.)
- Abortion refers to the deliberate termination of a pregnancy, either for medical or social reasons. It is legal in the UK under the conditions of the 1967 Abortion Act.
- Aquinas' Natural Law would condemn abortion as inherently evil as it involves the direct killing of an innocent life, going against the primary precept of preservation of life. This applies to all abortions, regardless of circumstance.
- Obviously, this position depends on holding the view that a foetus counts as a person from the point of conception, which is a contested view.
- Some may consider Kainz' view that the precepts of order in society and reproduction may support abortion in the case of rape or incest, as these actions clearly go against the right to have children in a way that conforms to social norms and may take away the right to make decisions about reproduction.
- He also points out that there may be two innocent lives at stake in the case of abortion, and that proponents of Aquinas' Natural Law often make exceptions to the first precept in the case of the foetus in order to preserve the life of the mother.
- The only other exceptions to the rule regarding abortion come under the principle of double effect. For example, it may be acceptable to perform a hysterectomy on a pregnant woman suffering from cancer of the uterus. The intention would be to save her life, the action may well save her life, the known but unintended side effect would be the death of the foetus. This is not the same as permitting abortion to save the life of the mother and candidates should be clear about the distinction.
- Candidates could include reference to the virtues in applying Aquinas' Natural Law – Kainz points out that a mother who brings up a child after rape or chooses to continue with a problem pregnancy rather than aborting could be seen to show fortitude: 'such decisions would belong in the category of heroic virtue.'

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

2. (b) 'All human laws should be based on Natural Law.'
Evaluate this view.

[30]

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

- From a Natural Law perspective, it could be argued that human law should be based on Natural Law as this fits into the hierarchy of laws established by Aquinas: human law should be derived from natural and divine law in order to create a just society that seeks good and avoids evil.
- As Natural Law is seen to derive from God's eternal law, and is seen as universal, it would form a clear and objective basis for human law.
- Natural Law theory is deontological – it judges the morality of the action itself rather than the consequence – and this makes it a good basis for human law as our laws need to clearly indicate which actions are permissible and which are not.
- However, many would argue that, in a modern, secular society, laws should be based on human reason rather than the eternal law of a Creator God. They would question the basis of Natural Law and argue that any perceived order and purpose in the universe is an assumption made by believers rather than a scientific fact.
- Candidates could consider different presentations of Natural Law here in order to counter this objection. Aristotle's contribution to Natural Law thinking does not require belief in the Christian God and it could be argued that basing human law on the end goal of eudaimonia would be positive.
- However, candidates could still question the belief that everything within the universe has a purpose, whether this is explicitly Christian or not.
- It could be argued that human law is already based on Natural Law as many of our key legal prohibitions such as murder and theft are also condemned by Natural Law, and many of the principles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, such as the right to life, to education, to freedom of religion are supported by Natural Law.
- However, candidates could point to examples in which a Natural Law approach seems to undermine certain human rights. For example, in the case of abortion, the rights of the unborn foetus are often prioritised by Natural Law thinkers over the rights of the mother. Scholars from within the Roman Catholic tradition, such as Kainz, have found this approach problematic.
- Candidates may also argue that basing human law on Natural Law could lead to inequality and persecution of minorities. For example, the Natural Law approach to homosexuality could be seen as discriminatory and to base human law on these principles could well be seen as a retrograde step when it comes to equalities legislation.

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