

GCE A Level Examiners' Report

Religious Studies
A Level
Summer 2025

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Introduction

Our Principal examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each component.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.¹

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	Eduqas offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.eduqas.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page
Grade boundary information	Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade. For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each component that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.	For unitised specifications click here: Results and Grade Boundaries and PRS (eduqas.co.uk)

¹ Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

Exam Results Analysis	Eduqas provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.eduqas.co.uk/
Bank of Professional Learning materials	Access our bank of Professional Learning materials from previous events from our secure website and additional pre-recorded materials available in the public domain.	Portal by WJEC or on the Eduqas subject page.
Become an examiner with WJEC.	We are always looking to recruit new examiners or moderators. These opportunities can provide you with valuable insight into the assessment process, enhance your skill set, increase your understanding of your subject and inform your teaching.	Become an Examiner Eduqas

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*please note we are unable to provide reports for the following options due to their small entry numbers:

1f. An Introduction to Sikhism

Executive Summary

The entries for this qualification remained stable this year with a very slight increase in entries of less than 1%. 18s remain the majority entry at 94.4% with 4.7% aged 19. This is stable. From the 18s, 72.7% are female, all from England, and 43.2% from academies, followed by 24.2% from FE establishments.

Positive aspects of candidates' performance:

- **strong answers used relevant religious texts** (e.g., Qur'an, Bible, Buddhist sutras), **historical context, denominational differences** to support their points and arguments effectively.
- many candidates showed **thoughtful analysis and evaluative skills**, in their AO2 responses, using a range of **scholars and balanced debate**.
- successful responses **demonstrated clear understanding and correct use of key theological, ethical, and philosophical terms** across components.
- some responses **demonstrated synoptic links and cross-topic insight effectively**, e.g., linking forgiveness with atonement or meditation with the Eightfold Path, showing holistic understanding.

Issues for centres to consider:

- weaker responses often went off-topic or answered the general theme instead of **focussing on the specific wording of the question**.
- some responses **lacked scriptural references, named scholars, or real examples**, weakening the depth and credibility of arguments weaker candidates in AO2 responses described religious beliefs or practices without offering analysis or evaluation, limiting their marks.
- some candidates **need to gain a clear understanding key concepts**.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

GCE A level

Summer 2025

COMPONENT 1A: A STUDY OF CHRISTIANITY

Overview of the Component

Which Assessment Objectives are being assessed in this examination?

Part (a) of each question tests candidates **AO1 skills** - knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.

Part (b) of each question tests candidates' **AO2 skills** - analysis and evaluation, with regards to aspects of and approaches to religion and belief.

Which aspects of the specification were tested in this examination?

- Q.1 Theme 3A: Social developments in religious thought – attitudes towards wealth
- Q.2 Theme 3C: The relationship between religion and society: religion, equality and discrimination
- Q.3 Theme 2F: Religious life – key moral principles
- Q.4 Theme 4A: Religious identity through diversity in baptism
- Q.5 Theme 4F: Religious identity through responses to poverty and injustice

Positive features of responses:

- many successful responses used a wide range of relevant scripture (e.g., James 4:3, Matthew 17:20, Exodus 3:17, Jesus' parables, Paul's teachings, etc.) and biblical figures (Abraham, Job, Mary, David) to support arguments.
- showed understanding of key theologians and critics (e.g., Ruether, McFague, Barth, Zwingli, Crossan, etc.) and integrated their ideas thoughtfully.
- demonstrated critical thinking, analysing and evaluating competing views (e.g., declarative vs. causative baptism, asceticism vs. stewardship, feminist contributions, Liberation Theology) and presenting well-structured, balanced debates.
- used appropriate terminology and contextualised arguments within historical, cultural, and denominational settings (e.g., 'sitz im leben' of the Early Church, Liberation Theology's Marxist influence, denominational differences on ordination).

Issues for centres to consider:

- some candidates need to focus more precisely on the question asked. Weaker responses often went off-topic, writing everything they knew about a theme rather than addressing the specific question (e.g., discussing general feminist theology instead of Ruether's specific views).
- some candidates need to provide more depth and evidence to support points. Some responses lacked depth, failing to include sufficient biblical passages, scholarly views, or historical examples to back up claims effectively.
- candidates need to have a clear understanding of key theological ideas (e.g., the meaning of asceticism, symbolism in baptism, God's behaviour, or Liberation Theology's critique of orthodoxy).
- less successful answers often missed important contextual details (e.g., denominational differences, cultural setting of the Early Church, historical developments in church practice, etc.).

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 This was by far the least popular question in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- provided context about the movement within the wider Pentecostal/Charismatic movement.
- referred to the definition and practices of the Word of Faith Movement, including proclamation, seed faith and tithes.
- provided an understanding of the right to expect good health and wealth based on biblical teachings exemplified. For example, James 4:3, Matthew 17:20, Exodus 3:17 and reference to Old Testament figures, including Abraham, King David, Job etc.
- were able to use specialist vocabulary well and develop key points based on key ideas.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- focus on the question asked, some answers focused on the dangers of wealth, or criticisms of the Prosperity Gospel.
- make specific reference to key ideas and Biblical passages to support the Prosperity Gospel.
- utilise examples of biblical figures such as Abraham, Job, King David etc.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- provided a clear understanding of what asceticism is and were able to refer to historical examples of ascetic practices within Christianity (especially within monasticism).
- referred to specific examples e.g. Desert Fathers, Prosperity Gospel, references to Job, Moses, Solomon, Abraham, Jesus.
- referred to the views of J.D Crossan, as well as critics of the Prosperity Gospel, such as Craig Blomberg.
- evaluated whether stewardship was an appropriate alternative to asceticism in the modern day. Insightful links were sometimes made to Liberation Theology.
- the Bible was included to support compatibility of the ascetic ideal with Christianity i.e. Jesus 40 days in the desert, etc.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- understand what is meant by 'the ascetic' ideal.
- refer to a range of biblical passages and examples to evaluate whether asceticism is compatible with Christianity.
- demonstrate an understanding of what the teachings on having wealth and possessions means for Christians in practice.
- need to consider the 'sitz im leben' of the Early Church and how this differs from the modern day.

Q.2 This was by far the most popular question in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- provided a clear explanation of Ruether's specific stance – androgynous humanity, place of Eve/Mary, hermeneutical principle in deciding what in scripture and tradition is authentically of the divine, call for female base communities, praxis-based theology, patriarchal views of Aquinas and Aristotle, Ruether's views that Jesus defied patriarchal norms.
- clearly focussed on the teachings of Ruether and the contributions in theology, pastoral theology, biblical criticism and feminism and her key arguments for a new use of language in comparison with Sallie Mc Fague.
- demonstrated a clear understanding of how Ruether's views on the role of women in the church.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- need to understand that Ruether's contribution was in several key areas e.g. attitudes, understanding patriarchal systems/views, promoting change in practical terms for women within the church, use of biblical texts to justify her arguments.
- need to focus on the question and Ruether's views about feminist theology.
- need to focus on Ruether rather than feminist theology in general.
- should recognise Ruether's belief that change within the church is possible, and her recommendations for reform.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- provided a balanced discussion of historical role of women in the church, especially with regards to ordination and contrasted and compared to contemporary contexts.
- entered into a balanced scholarly debate about the different ways of viewing
- 'equality' and an awareness of the differences that exist between denominations.
- engaged with the Biblical text including specific examples to support points. For example, the teachings of Paul, the role of women in the Bible such as Eve, Mary Mother of Jesus and Mary Magdalene, the teachings of Jesus etc.
- demonstrated an awareness of the current progress that has been made regarding equality within the church and evaluated the extent of this progress.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- need to identify Christian denominations to clarify differences in thought and teaching i.e. 'Christians have ordained women since'.... Is generic rather than 'The Church of England'.
- need to address the question and don't just write all you know about different aspects of feminist theology to answer the question.
- focus on greater depth and breadth, referring to specific biblical passages and examples to support points including various scholars in connection with this view.

Section B

Q.3 This was the most popular question in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- demonstrated a clear understanding of the biblical basis of forgiveness as a Christian moral principle. For example, Jesus' teaching on forgiveness, both directly and in parables.
- demonstrated that forgiveness is central to the notion of atonement. Made good use of the evidence for God's forgiveness providing an example (e.g. Jesus on the cross). Referred to the Doctrine of Atonement and Jesus' death as a moral example, demonstrating the need for forgiveness.
- developed the idea into the expression of agapeic love and linked this to relevant passages of Scripture. Synoptic links were made to the Ethics component.
- understood the impact of forgiveness of society in general as well providing harmony in relationship with God and others.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- need to clearly identify teachings related to forgiveness e.g. Lord's Prayer, Matthew 18:21-22, Sermon on the Mount and the various teachings of Paul.
- understand that forgiveness of sin as a core concept of Christianity - to be unified with God/ Jesus death on cross, etc., a core concept within the religion.
- focus on the specific question set and not on other key moral principles such as regard for the truth and love of neighbour.
- demonstrate a depth of knowledge and understanding of a range of key biblical passages about the importance of forgiveness.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- clearly identified the basis of God's love for humanity in the Christian Gospel with a discussion of how the life of Jesus exemplified God's behaviour.
- made successful connections to Peter Abelard's moral atonement theory.
- identified the tensions between the God of the Old and New Testaments, making extensive and accurate engagement with the biblical text and drawing contrasting examples of God's behaviour across the whole of scripture.
- considered whether God's behaviour is an appropriate basis for morality given his transcendent nature.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- support points made with evidence and examples from biblical sources or sources of authority within Christianity.
- ensure there are key examples used to support and unpack God's character and other theories to allow depth and breadth.
- demonstrate in- depth knowledge and understanding of a range of biblical passages/examples showing an awareness of their context and consider the reasons for God's actions.

Q.4 This was the second most popular question in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- clearly identified Barth's specific position that baptism is declarative and proceeds faith and were able to demonstrate how his views differed from that of Anabaptists and Augustine.
- key evidence was used from the Bible to support/refute adult and infant baptism in line with the question. For example, passages supporting adult baptism, including the example of Jesus, Paul, Lydia etc.
- referred to Barth's belief that baptism does not affect salvation and thus does not need to be performed as an infant.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- refer to the works of Barth demonstrating in depth knowledge of Karl Barth and the reasoning behind his views. Demonstrate understanding that Barth was not an Anabaptist.
- demonstrate knowledge and understanding about the wider arguments for Believer's baptism and refer accurately to sources of wisdom and authority.
- Provide specific references to biblical passages which support adult baptism, and not just the example of Jesus.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- analysed and evaluated the views of Zwingli, Barth and Augustine, with reference to different understandings of baptism.
- provided a clear comparison of the arguments for declarative and causative views of baptism.
- explored biblical evidence suggesting baptism is more than a symbolic act for those who believe baptism is not a sacrament.
- made accurate synoptic links to ideas about predestination and justification by faith.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- gain a clear understanding of what 'symbolism' means and don't just equate it with 'superficial' or 'meaningless.'
- be aware of the different values that symbolism may have for believers.
- ensure the question is addressed and don't write all you know about theological ideas about baptism.
- take extra care when making links to theologians such as Luther and Calvin that their stance on baptism is correctly represented.
- refer to the views of key scholars and ensure they are analysing and evaluating scholarly views and not just describing them.

Q.5 This was the least popular question in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- showed an awareness of the focus on praxis and the tensions between Marxist teachings and Christian beliefs.
- showed an awareness of how responses may have changed over the years and were able to identify key figures in Catholicism and substantiate their response to Liberation Theology with published documentation and/or key quotes.
- referred to negative responses by the Roman Catholic Church to Liberation Theology because of its Marxist influence with an emphasis on orthopraxy over orthodoxy. Also, Liberation Theology's politicisation of certain Biblical passages, such as Exodus.
- Referred to positive aspects by the Roman Catholic Church to Liberation Theology such as the Roman Catholic Church's acceptance of base communities, their adoption of the phrase 'preferential option for the poor', their concerns with social justice and the invitation of Gustav Gutierrez to the Vatican in 2015.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- refer to the range of responses from the Roman Catholic Church, both negative and positive.
- demonstrate greater in-depth knowledge and understanding of the response to Liberation Theology from Cardinal Ratzinger, Pope John Paul VI and Pope Francis.
- give specific examples of reactions from the Roman Catholic Church, such as adopting the phrase 'preferential option for the poor', inviting Gutierrez to the Vatican etc.
- explain in detail why the Catholic Church was critical of Liberation Theology's Marxist influence and its emphasis on orthopraxy over orthodoxy.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- identified that despite rejections, Liberation theology was able to influence orthopraxy, pointing out the positive changes within the Roman Catholic Church towards the poor.
- demonstrated a clear understanding of the praxis of the Gospel but a distinction between social interaction (which is Christian teaching) and violent revolution (that is not Christian teaching) and why the 'cultural challenge' was therefore limited.
- demonstrated breadth, with a wide historical sweep and covering a range of arguments, including Liberation Theology's Marxist influence, emphasis on orthopraxy over orthodoxy, Liberation Theology's religious foundation and the example of Jesus, and the range of responses from the Roman Catholic Church.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- focus on the specific question set. Some answers focused on the general criticisms of Liberation Theology, rather than assessing whether Liberation Theology provided a challenge to the Catholic Church.
- ensure that AO2 arguments are analysed and evaluated clearly and not simply stated that 'this shows that Liberation theology was successful/unsuccessful' without pointing out why.
- understand what is meant by the 'culture of the Catholic Church'.
- refer to church documents, teachings and church culture with direct links to the key concepts of Liberation Theology.
- provide a wider historical overview rather than just focussing on just one or two events.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

GCE A level

Summer 2025

COMPONENT 1B: A STUDY OF ISLAM

Overview of the Component

Which Assessment Objectives are being assessed in this examination?

Part (a) of each question tests candidates **AO1 skills** - knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.

Part (b) of each question tests candidates' **AO2 skills** - analysis and evaluation, with regards to aspects of and approaches to religion and belief.

Which aspects of the specification were tested in this examination?

- Q.1 Theme 3D: The importance of family life for the Muslim religion
- Q.2 Theme 3E: Islam and migration: the challenges of being a Muslim in Britain today
- Q.3 Theme 4D: Diversity within Islam: Beliefs and practices distinctive of Shi'a Islam
- Q.4 Theme 1A: The significance on the development of Islam of both the life and teachings of Muhammad in Makkah following the Night of Power
- Q.5 Theme 1D: Sources of shari'a (the way): Qur'an; sunna (clear trodden path) and hadith (report); qiyas (analogy); ijma (consensus)

Positive features of responses:

- demonstrated breadth and depth, often including spiritual, emotional, and practical factors, supported by Qur'an, Hadith, and scholarly references.
- showed perceptive and nuanced understanding, for example distinguishing between uniqueness and variation in practices, or between assimilation and integration in secular contexts.
- provided clear structure, correct terminology, precise definitions, and well-supported examples, reflecting good preparation and understanding.
- engaged thoughtfully with key words and statements in questions (e.g., "central," "impact," "challenges"), showing critical awareness and making clear judgements aligned to their AO2 arguments.

Issues for centres to consider:

- focus addressing specific wording of the statement/ question, not the topic in general.
- balance breadth and depth – so that some points raised are backed with evidence and examples in depth.
- ensure a personal judgement is made consistent with the discussion, in part (b) responses.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 This was the by far the most popular question in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- clearly addressed the family's importance in Islam overall.
- some approached from the point of view of individual members and the importance of each, related to Islam.
- others gave an overview of the family and role as a whole unit within society, according to Islam. Both approaches were valid and creditable.
- considered a breadth of factors including spiritual and emotional support as well as practical points.
- referred to sources of authority, especially Qur'an and Hadith, to support comments made.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- need to go beyond describing roles to explaining importance.
- include roles such as teachers of Islam and at times of rites of passage.
- support points made by adding examples or references to sources of authority such as the Qur'an.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- considered a broad range of factors including practical support, religious teaching as well as central to upbringing.
- linked the centrality of the family to learning about prayer, showing different aspects may both be central to Islam.
- included a clear judgement consistent with the argument made.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- consider a broader range of factors beyond comparing the centrality of family vs prayer.
- focus sharply on 'central to Islam' rather than roughly on importance in general.
- include some or more supporting information, references or quotes, to back up points made.

Q.2 This was by far the least popular question in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- provided a detailed range of areas of challenge: in education, media, prayer facilities and so on.
- referrer to scholarly views, articles, reports or politicians' statements in some excellent responses.
- included the challenge not just from mainstream society, but of finding balance with close knit Muslim communities where there may be pressure not to integrate by some.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- balance breadth with depth – all 'breadth' may be lacking so try to develop some 'depth' in commentary about a couple of areas of challenge.
- give specific references e.g. reports, scholars, examples, to back up the challenges mentioned.
- differentiate challenges from simple problems or difficulties.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- drew out the point that Islam is based on God at every level, seemingly the opposite of secularism which is not.
- made perceptive comments about differences between assimilation and integration.
- referred to specific areas where Muslims might assimilate and other areas they might avoid, such as following food laws.
- some made perceptive comments about the nature of secular society and how far Muslims might find compromise acceptable to fit in.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- address each word in the statement: 'total' and 'impossible' are not the same as difficult, so should be specifically addressed.
- if giving several different perspectives, try to substantiate each one in a clear paragraph.
- it may be better to focus on two or three, with more substantial discussion, than many viewpoints with little justification.

Section B

Q.3 This was the second most popular question in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- where background was given, it was to explain the practices, rather than beliefs or historical information in isolation.
- gave correct terminology and definitions for three specific practices.
- wrote clear paragraphs, well defined and clearly supported, one for each practice given.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- focus on practices and not just general background information.
- ensure practices rather than beliefs are specifically identified and three are given, as required by the question.
- give specific, precise details and terminology.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- defined unique and referred to the word in each paragraph or at least at the end of the response.
- considered several angles of uniqueness, focusing on what was different about Shi'a practices.
- commented on significance: if unique, does that constitute difference of belief or innovation?
- demonstrated differentiation between specific Shi'a practices and asked whether these differences made something unique or just a variation on the same thing. Many judged the practices to be similar to mainstream Sunni practices, with little to distinguish for the outside observer.
- Ashura and self-harm were identified as a difference, but some did note Zuhd in Sufism, and various ascetic and austere practices, might be seen as similar in eliciting self-sacrifice in time and comfort from the adherent.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- ensure the response focuses on the subject of the statement, omitting just general background information.
- pinpoint specific aspects of difference – such as in prayer, the use of a clay tablet for prostration and inclusion of 'Ali's name.
- focus in on the word unique and discuss its significance with regards to the chosen practices.

Q.4 This was the most popular question in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- kept background descriptions of the Night succinct.
- linked them to ‘impact’, such as the opening of Muhammad’s mission.
- focussed on the word ‘impact’ in the question and mentioned preaching, persecution, prophethood and migration, all as a result of this.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- ensure the impact of the Night of Power is drawn out from events.
- provide a broad time reference considering Muhammad’s life throughout the Meccan period to consider impact in depth.
- focus in on the life-changing impact of taking on prophethood from this point – including the impact on the person of Muhammad.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- defined what pre-Islamic Arabia was in social and religious context, sometimes known as the age of ignorance (Jahilayyah).
- distinguished between teachings to address needs of the time (usually agree points) and teachings directed by God (usually disagree points).
- considered the possibility that the message was timeless and so not determined by pre-Islamic Arabia at all.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- provide a clearer introduction to set context of the time and show that the word ‘determined’ is being considered.
- write in clear, logical paragraphs including explanation to achieve a balance between multiple factors and more in-depth evaluation of one or two.
- ensure that a personal judgement is made in agreement with the line of argument taken, which may be in a concluding paragraph.

Q.5 This was the very narrowly then least popular question in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- defined several sources such as Hadith/ Sunna, Ijma, Qiyas, Aql and Urf. Not all were necessary but good responses typically gave three.
- explained why such sources were used, such as to address questions and needs.
- gave examples worked through of how the sources could address a practical question of religious devotion or a modern ethical issue, not already answered by the Qur'an.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

avoid lengthy background paragraphs about the Qur'an – this question is about other sources. Explain why other sources are used, rather than write descriptions of those sources. For example, instead of describing the Hadith as sayings, explain they are needed to provide details for prayer not fully explained by the Qur'an.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- saw the significance of the word 'challenges' in terms of challenging God's word.
- referred to different schools of thought such as Qur'anists, Sunni Muslims and Shi'a Muslims, who also use the authority of Imams teaching.
- made comment on 'divine' of God-given nature, the focus of Islamic law.
- contrasted the word 'challenges' with 'complements' and considered how different sources were supposed to be used together and not in opposition to the Qur'an, and could never over-rule it.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- focus in on the word 'challenges' and include an introduction to the word with a definition.
- consider how teachings are arrived at in Islam, referring to different sources.
- refer to different schools of thought or scholarly positions.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

GCE A level

Summer 2025

COMPONENT 1C: A STUDY OF JUDAISM

Overview of the Component

Which Assessment Objectives are being assessed in this examination?

Part (a) of each question tests candidates **AO1 skills** - knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.

Part (b) of each question tests candidates' **AO2 skills** - analysis and evaluation, with regards to aspects of and approaches to religion and belief.

Which aspects of the specification were tested in this examination?

- Q.1 Theme 2D: The diversity of views within Judaism with regards to mitzvot.
- Q.2 Theme 2F: The importance of the Ten Sayings (Aseret ha-Dibrot).
- Q.3 Theme 1A: Abraham and the establishment of the covenant of circumcision.
- Q.4 Theme 3D: Jewish family life.
- Q.5 Theme 4A: The role of the synagogue.

Positive features of responses:

- many candidates were critical in their approach to the question topic, particularly in the AO2 Part (b) responses. This entailed candidates having the confidence to interrogate the statement set and reach clear evaluative judgements following analysis of a range of arguments.
- The breadth of supporting evidence that candidates utilised to exemplify their arguments was impressive, including the selective and relevant use of synoptic links. This demonstrates that candidates have a broad command of the specification and are able to synthesize their knowledge.
- there were some insightful examples of candidates discussing Judaism as a lived religion, including relevant references beyond the specification, for example, to articles in the Jewish Chronicle, comments by contemporary Rabbis (e.g., Dr Jonathan Romain), and discussion of their lived context, particularly in relation to questions 3 and 4 exploring the role of the synagogue and the Jewish home.
- the majority of candidates referred to a diversity of Jewish beliefs, ranging from Hasidic to Progressive, across the paper. This shows a rich and nuanced understanding of the breadth of Jewish beliefs and practices.

Issues for centres to consider:

- one aspect to consider is the importance of analytical and evaluative, as opposed to descriptive, writing. Some candidates, particularly in response to Questions 2b and Q3b, tended to describe, rather than analyse or evaluate.
- remind candidates to address all parts of the question. Where the question specifies two elements – for example, home and family life; religious and ethical life – the candidate should address both, as only discussing one aspect will limit the quality of the response.
- candidates should be reminded to manage their time carefully across the paper. It is evident that some candidates run out of time when it comes to finishing their final question. This can lead to some potentially strong answers being unfinished. Supporting candidates with their exam strategy, including managing their timing for each question, is key here.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

GCE A level

Summer 2025

COMPONENT 1D: A STUDY OF BUDDHISM

Overview of the Component

Which Assessment Objectives are being assessed in this examination?

Part (a) of each question tests candidates **AO1 skills** - knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.

Part (b) of each question tests candidates' **AO2 skills** - analysis and evaluation, with regards to aspects of and approaches to religion and belief.

Which aspects of the specification were tested in this examination?

- Q.1 Theme 1E: The main themes and concepts in two Mahayana texts
- Q.2 Theme 1C: Buddhist texts as sources of wisdom and authority – their use and treatment in daily life
- Q.3 Theme 4B: Meditation
- Q.4 Theme 2C: Arhat and bodhisattva - Theravada and Mahayana teachings
- Q.5 Theme 3B: The relationship between religion and society: respect and recognition and the ways that religious traditions view other religions and non-religious worldviews and their truth claims. Responses to the challenges from science

Positive features of responses:

- demonstrated strong knowledge and understanding of key Buddhist concepts, texts, and contexts across Mahayana and Theravada traditions.
- effectively connected textual references and quotations (e.g. “form is emptiness”) to the questions and wider Buddhist thought.
- focussed on the specific wording within AO2 questions, addressing key terms like “accurately,” “still have relevance,” or “essential.”
- showed breadth by considering multiple perspectives, including different schools of Buddhism (e.g., Mahayana, Theravada, Secular, Pure Land) and alternative viewpoints.

Issues for centres to consider:

- some responses lacked clarity and depth in understanding key texts, concepts, and their place within Buddhist traditions.
- some responses frequently included irrelevant or extraneous details, straying from the specific question focus.
- some responses lacked the use of textual quotations and examples to support arguments, analysis and evaluation.
- there was a tendency in weaker responses to oversimplify complex ideas (e.g., equating Bodhisattva solely with compassion) without further development.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 This was the least popular question in this section.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the Mahayana context of the Heart Sutra.
- identified successfully the themes and concepts in the text.
- made a connection between these and concepts and the Mahayana context.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- need to acquire a clear understanding of the Heart Sutra and its place in the Mahayana canon.
- should memorise a line or two from the text to help with responses e.g. 'form is emptiness and emptiness is form'.
- focus on the question set and avoid extraneous detail e.g. the contents of the Pali Canon, etc.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- understood what type of reality the Heart Sutra envisioned.
- considered alternative visions of reality to that of the Heart Sutra.
- kept a focus on whether the Heart Sutra 'accurately' represented reality.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- try the technique of questioning the question before writing commences e.g. what is meant by reality and reality for whom? Mahayana Buddhist reality or Theravada Buddhist reality, etc.
- work with any short quotations from the text to develop a response e.g. 'form is emptiness and emptiness is form' – is reality really full of emptiness and what does that even mean or imply?
- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the connections between this and other elements of the course studied.

Q.2 This was the most popular question in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- understood what is meant by the Four Parajikas
- demonstrated a grasp of how these apply within the context of the monastic sangha in Theravada Buddhism.
- kept a focus on ways in which the Four Parajikas were serious defeats.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- need to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of each of the four parajikas.
- must think more carefully about how the four defeats might affect the life of the monastic sangha, which makes them serious.
- avoid digressing onto comparisons with Mahayana Buddhism or the impact on lay Buddhists as this is not required by the question.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- demonstrated a clear understanding of how the parajikas are limited to the Theravada monastic Sangha.
- showed breadth and depth in understanding ways in which “the modern world” could be interpreted with regard to the question asked.
- kept a focus on the keyword in the question “still have relevance” and addressed this particular point.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- focus on the key wording used in the question, including the command word.
- think of ways in which “the modern world” could be understood so as to further develop analysis and evaluation.
- try to show knowledge and understanding of other parts of the course to further improve discussion – e.g. the relevance of the Parajikas with regard to the various schools of Buddhism.

Section B

Q.3 This was the most popular question in this section.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- demonstrated very good understanding of different types of meditation in the variety of schools of Buddhism.
- demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the context of meditation within Buddhism such as, for example, its place in the Noble Eightfold Path.
- provided information on the role of meditation in the life of the founder of Buddhism, Siddhartha Gautama.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- try to avoid making general points about meditation which do not display very much knowledge and understanding.
- part (b) asks specifically about Metta bhavana and therefore avoid spending too much time explaining what this involves in part (a).
- provide the key points with regard to meditation as being the way to gaining awakening.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- demonstrated a good understanding of what Metta Bhavana involves.
- placed this within the context of other forms of meditation within Buddhism so that its importance or otherwise could be analysed and evaluated.
- provided context with regard to different forms of Buddhism and different types of meditation.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- focus more closely on the question which is about “the most important type” of meditation in Buddhism.
- demonstrate an understanding of what meditation involves, in order to analyse and evaluate the importance of different types of meditation.
- give consideration to ways in which samatha or vipassana might be more or less important depending on the goal of meditation in the first instance.

Q.4 This was the least popular question in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- understood what is meant by Bodhisattva in Buddhism.
- showed knowledge and understanding of how a Mahayana Buddhist might become a bodhisattva via developing the six perfections and taking the Bodhisattva Vow etc.
- gave examples of Bodhisattvas to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding e.g. Manjushri and Avalokitesvara.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- move beyond immediately trying to draw a contrast between the arhat path and that of the bodhisattva.
- keep in mind ways in which the different schools of Buddhism might regard the concept of the Bodhisattva e.g. Pure Land vs Secular Buddhism, etc.
- avoid simplistic assessment of the Bodhisattva = compassion as the main characteristic without further development e.g. wisdom.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- showed good understanding of the main difference between the approach taken by Theravada and that taken by Mahayana.
- opened the question up through bringing in other schools of Buddhism such as Secular Buddhism or Pure Land Buddhism.
- considered ways in which what the Bodhisattva represents could/could not be seen as essential in Buddhism.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- focus on the wording of the question whether the concept was “essential” in Buddhism, i.e. what does “essential” mean and “essential” for which Buddhists?
- use examples in the response such as reference to the Dalai Lama, Manjushri, Amida Buddha etc.
- demonstrate a better understanding of the overall background of Theravada vs Mahayana.

Q.5 This was the second most popular question in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the brief reference to the Kalama Sutta and what it means in terms of avoidance of blind faith.
- demonstrated connections with other relevant parts of the Buddhism course concerning blind faith e.g. the Buddha following his own path and stating that people should be their own refuge, etc.
- illustrated responses with apt references to other parts of the dharma such as the Parable of the Water Snake, the Parable of the Raft, the story of Kisa Gotami, etc.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- demonstrate a clear understanding of key texts as identified in the specification.
- be responsive in widening the response made so that a proper ‘examination’ of the topic can be given.
- show understanding of what is meant by ‘blind faith’ and ways in which Buddhism is said to avoid using it.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- provided some clear points with regard to what aspects of science might be included e.g. Quantum Physics etc.
- considered the different schools of Buddhism and how there might or might not be a close relationship with science such as Pure Land or Secular Buddhism.
- showed some nuanced understanding of the phrase “very close relationship” and drew conclusions to the relationship being less close or not close at all.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- demonstrate that the terms in the question are understood e.g. what is meant by “science” with regard to Buddhism.
- avoid simplistic thinking with regard to Buddhism as a whole and consider whether different schools of Buddhism have very different relationships with science.
- demonstrate more breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding of Buddhism e.g. there are metaphysical concepts such as rebirth, samsara etc. and consider how these might relate to science.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

COMPONENT 1E: A STUDY OF HINDUISM

Overview of the Component

Which Assessment Objectives are being assessed in this examination?

Part (a) of each question tests candidates **AO1 skills** - knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.

Part (b) of each question tests candidates' **AO2 skills** - analysis and evaluation, with regards to aspects of and approaches to religion and belief.

Which aspects of the specification were tested in this examination?

- Q.1 Theme 3B: The challenges to Hinduism from secularisation and science
- Q.2 Theme 3F: The changing roles of men and women in Hinduism (including different views within the religion)
- Q.3 Theme 1E: Contributions made to Hinduism by Gandhi
- Q.4 Theme 2A: Brahman and Atman
- Q5 Theme 4A: Puja in the home and the mandir

Due to the low number of entries for this option it is only possible to provide the following summary:

Positive features of responses:

- focused on the specific wording of the question set, fulfilling its demands.
- provided statements and arguments fully supported by relevant evidence and examples.
- made excellent use of scholarly views and quotations.
- when responding to AO2 questions provided a structured and logical conclusion based on the arguments presented in the response.

Issues for centres to consider:

- candidates need to focus on the specific wording of the question set. Break down the using both the command word and the keywords within the question to help focus on what the question requires. Examples of key words which some candidates failed to appreciate in their answers include - Q1b 'no threat', Q3b 'more political' and Q5b 'personal worship'.
- encourage candidates to use a broader and extensive range of referencing, including the relevant views of scholars. This enhances responses and provides a more meaningful insight to the topic being discussed.
- when answering AO2 part (b) questions candidates need to remember the importance of providing a structured and logical conclusion.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

GCE A level

Summer 2025

COMPONENT 2: A STUDY OF PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Overview of the Component

Which Assessment Objectives are being assessed in this examination?

Part (a) of each question tests candidates **AO1 skills** - knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.

Part (b) of each question tests candidates' **AO2 skills** - analysis and evaluation, with regards to aspects of and approaches to religion and belief.

Which aspects of the specification were tested in this examination?

- Q.1 Theme 3D: The influence of religious experience on religious practice and faith
- Q.2 Theme 3C: Challenges to the objectivity and authenticity of religious experience
- Q.3 Theme 1C: Challenges to inductive arguments
- Q.4 Theme 2C: Religious responses to the problem of evil (ii): Irenaean type theodicy
- Q.5 Theme 1D: Deductive arguments - origins of the ontological argument

Positive features of responses:

- demonstrated an ability to stay focused on what was being asked in the question avoiding unnecessary tangents.
- consistently used well-chosen examples from religious traditions and texts to illustrate their points clearly and effectively. More successful responses also incorporated a broader range of scholarly views, particularly in specific questions such as Q2a, 2b, 3b, and 5b.
- demonstrated a clear grasp of key philosophical and theological terms (e.g., *a priori/a posteriori*, epistemic distance, inductive/deductive) and applied them accurately in context.
- demonstrated understanding of complex ideas, such as the value of religious experiences for communities, or challenges to their authenticity and validity.
- were well-organised, with logical progression of ideas and good use of specialist language relevant to the topic.
- Demonstrated good AO2 skills, analysing and evaluating different viewpoints and presenting counterarguments thoughtfully. They recognised alternative explanations or critiques (e.g., sacred texts vs. religious experience, empirical vs. rational arguments) and used these to enrich their lines of argument.

Issues for centre to consider:

- candidates must focus on the question set and not refer to irrelevant material. For example, do not refer simply to the strengths/weaknesses of Irenaean type theodicy when the question focusses on whether or not it succeeds in defending the God of Classical Theism.
- candidates must gain a clear understanding of key concepts, scholars, or arguments.
- candidates need to demonstrate clarity or depth by linking examples, arguments, and terminology to the question set.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 This question was slightly more popular than Q.2.

What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- provided good, relevant examples of religious experiences linked to religious communities.
- demonstrated clear understanding how such experiences might be of value.
- examined different ways in which the experiences might be of value, such as affirming belief etc.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- clearly state what constitutes a religious community or what constitutes a religious experience.
- focus on the question set and link any particular religious experience to the religious community.
- focus on specific examples to show knowledge and understanding.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- used examples of religious traditions to query their dependency on religious experience.
- some demonstrated nuanced understanding of what constitutes a religious experience – prayer/visions/worship – and ways in which communities might or might not be dependent.
- attempted to formulate counterarguments to the statement, such as sacred writing or revealed laws being alternatives to religious experience which communities might be dependent upon.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- understand what the question is asking i.e. it is about religious experience and religious communities.
- avoid using simplistic agree/disagree approaches to the statement in the question as this prevents any deeper analysis and evaluation.
- ensure that when examples/evidence are used in support of the argument not too much time or space is given to these to the detriment of the overall discussion.

Q.2 This question was slightly less popular than Q.1.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- demonstrated excellent knowledge and understanding of Caroline Franks Davis and the challenges she identified.
- used examples used to support the challenges made - subject/object/description based challenges.
- gave consideration given to the specific wording of the question as to 'the objectivity and authenticity of religious experience'.
- **The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:**
- gain a clear understanding of all three of the challenges identified by Caroline Franks Davis.
- avoid mixing up the challenges which results in confusion, for example, subject-related with object related, etc.
- provide apt examples for each challenge rather than generic ones which do not necessarily apply.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- made very good use of views of scholars/schools of thought such as Swinburne's principles of testimony and credulity.
- also made apt use of scholars/schools of thought which might challenge the validity of religious experience such as Hume, etc.
- the examples provided illustrated clearly both the challenges and the response to the challenges e.g. those taken from the life of the Prophet or from St Bernadette of Lourdes.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- provide more of an assessment of what the term 'valid' as used in the question might mean and imply.
- avoid using scholars/schools of thought which are not entirely relevant to the question e.g. Logical Positivism/the verification principle, etc.
- present a more nuanced selection of scholars/schools of thought which are used e.g. Freud (religion as neurosis might be useful, but not his understanding of the ego/id/super-ego), etc.

Section B

Q.3 This was very narrowly the least popular question in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- some very good levels of knowledge and understanding with regard to the two named scientific explanations: the Big Bang Theory and Charles Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection.
- placed the scientific explanations within the context of being challenges to inductive arguments.
- provided exemplars of inductive arguments and their relationship to the scientific theories e.g. cosmological/teleological arguments.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- develop a greater understanding of the named scientific explanations – providing a one or two sentence summary of these is not really adequate.
- be clearer as to the difference between inductive/deductive as applied to the arguments for God's existence – here, only inductive are required.
- provide a clearer link between the inductive argument and the scientific explanations.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- demonstrated confidence in dealing with terms such as inductive/deductive/*a priori/a posteriori*, etc.
- showed good knowledge and understanding of the cosmological/teleological/ontological arguments and ways in which they might or might not be more or less persuasive.
- considered what 'more persuasive' might mean in the context of the question e.g. empirical based explanations vs those based on rational thought, etc.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- have a clear understanding about what constitutes a scientific explanation and what constitutes a philosophical one.
- use scholars/schools of thought with more precision e.g. where does Hume stand with regard to the issue and are his arguments scientific or philosophical?
- consider what the phrase 'more persuasive' might mean in terms of the arguments presented.

Q.4 This was the second most popular question in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- demonstrated an impressive and comprehensive level of knowledge and understanding of Irenaean type theodicy.
- provided the context for the theodicy in terms of the problem of evil as outlined via the Inconsistent Triad, etc. showed skill in using specialist language provided by Hick such as 'epistemic distance' and 'eschatological justification'.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- provide more of a context to the response e.g. what is the problem of evil in the first instance which gave rise to Irenaean type theodicy?
- demonstrate greater understanding with regards to what is meant by Irenaean type theodicy i.e. it is more than just 'a soul-making' theodicy.
- avoid introducing the Augustinian type theodicy as this is not required by the question and confuses the response given.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- demonstrated a clear understanding of what the question was asking by providing some form of definition as to what the God of Classical Theism might be.
- provided a nuanced response to whether the Irenaean type theodicy was 'completely unsuccessful' or not by suggesting that in some ways it might be but in other ways possibly not.
- focussed just on the theodicy named in the question rather than diverge on to Augustinian type theodicy or the issue of theodicy in general.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- focus on the question asked – in this case it is not about the strengths/weaknesses of Irenaean type theodicy, but about whether or not it succeeds in defending the God of Classical Theism.
- avoid attempting to write everything that is known about theodicies – both Augustinian and Irenaean type – as this is not required by the question.
- when providing examples to support analysis and evaluation ensure that these are clear and not over-stated e.g. try using Rowe and Gregory S. Paul.

Q.5 This was the most popular question in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- provided the context of what is meant by a deductive argument e.g. premises leading to an inescapable conclusion.
- demonstrated excellent accurate and relevant knowledge of St Anselm and the arguments put forward in the Proslogion.
- matched the development of St Anselm's argument by providing a logical sequence of points regarding Proslogion 2 and 3.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- avoid writing at great length and introducing various scholars/schools of thought when all that is required is an examination of St Anselm.
- Remember that the part (a) questions require a demonstration of knowledge and understanding rather than evaluation – thus a critique of St Anselm using the views of Paley etc. is not required.
- match the clarity of St Anselm by providing a cogent/coherent/concise manner of writing – with this type of question clearly structured responses are crucial.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- demonstrated ease and familiarity with the technical terms required such as *a priori*/deductive/*a posteriori*/inductive etc.
- were able to provide useful counter-arguments to the statement in the question e.g. *a priori* arguments are more/less persuasive than other arguments such as *a posteriori* ones.
- made useful reference back to St Anselm as an exemplar of *a priori* arguments in addition to Descartes/Malcolm and the critique provided by, for example, Kant.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:
read the question carefully and clearly understand what is being asked for by the question – e.g. does the introduction of scientific challenges provide what is required by the wording of the question.

show a greater familiarity with what might prevent *a posteriori* arguments from being more persuasive e.g. dependence on empirical evidence which might change over time.

only select scholars/schools of thought which will be relevant or which need to be introduced in a more nuanced fashion e.g. Hume and the fallacy of composition etc.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

GCE A level

Summer 2025

COMPONENT 3: A STUDY OF RELIGION AND ETHICS

Overview of the Component

Which Assessment Objectives are being assessed in this examination?

Part (a) of each question tests candidates **AO1 skills** - knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.

Part (b) of each question tests candidates' **AO2 skills** - analysis and evaluation, with regards to aspects of and approaches to religion and belief.

Which aspects of the specification were tested in this examination?

- Q.1 Theme 3a : Joseph Fletcher Situation Ethics – his rejection of other forms of ethics and his acceptance of agape as the basis of morality
- Q.2 Theme 3e : John Stuart Mill's development of Utilitarianism: types of pleasure, the harm principle and the use of rules
- Q.3 Theme 2e: Bernard Hoose's overview of the Proportionalist debate
- Q.4 Theme 1e : Meta-ethical approaches – Intuitionism
- Q.5 Theme 4e: Concepts of Libertarianism

Positive features of responses:

- demonstrated an in-depth understanding of ethical theories such as Situation Ethics, Utilitarianism, Proportionalism, and Intuitionism.
- incorporated relevant scholars (e.g., Moore, Ross, Sartre, Mill) and illustrative examples (e.g., Tyranny of the Majority, Nozick's Utility Monster) to support analysis without becoming sidetracked.
- accurately employed key terms such as 'intrinsic', 'proportionate reason', 'cognitive', 'teleological', etc. and demonstrated understanding of concepts like agape, prima facie duties, and moral deliberation.
- demonstrated an ability to compare theories meaningfully in AO2 responses, assess practical implications (e.g., for real-life morality), and evaluate strengths and weaknesses with nuanced conclusions.

Issues for centre to consider:

- poor handwriting made it difficult, and sometimes impossible, for examiners to award.
- assess your candidates' ability to write under pressure early on in the course and if alternative arrangements are needed then put them in place.
- if handwriting overlaps lines, write on alternate lines.
- if handwriting is cramped, leave spaces between words.
- avoid writing additional points in tiny writing, add an asterisk or other symbol and add the extra information later in the booklet.
- the 'trolley problem' whilst an interesting thought experiment is not relevant in every response.
- lengthy general introductions informing examiners of what an essay will include, or AO2 conclusions that simply recapped what has already been written, are unnecessary and should be avoided. No conclusion is necessary at all for an AO1 response.
-

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

Q.1 This was the least popular question in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- worked methodically through each of the approaches that Fletcher rejected and the reasons why.
- Provided a good, broad knowledge of the biblical basis for Situation ethics with a range of examples.
- demonstrated an understanding of the reasons why Fletcher rejected traditional ideas about conscience in favour of conscience as an exercise in moral deliberation.
- were able to apply some of the principles to the question to justify the use of agape.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- use scriptural references beyond just 'love your neighbour'.
- demonstrate an understanding that 'other approaches' relates to antinomianism and legalism, rather than all the other specific ethical theories that have been studied.
- include all aspects of the question, not simply a rejection of legalism.
- demonstrate an understanding that Situation Ethics as a Protestant development that is rejected by Catholicism.
- link any included principles of Situation Ethics to the question.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- noticed the scope for meta-ethical consideration in this question and could consider whether there could be any such thing as intrinsic good at all or whether good was definable as agape.
- weighed up whether there were other 'intrinsic goods' such as happiness, God or other 'goods' as referenced by scripture, such as faith and hope.
- structured their answers purposefully, weighing up arguments for and against before coming to a reasoned conclusion.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- learn the meaning of the word 'intrinsic', and how it applies to the nature of agape, rather than simply discuss strengths and weaknesses of Situation Ethics.
- think about how or why choosing or rejecting agape would cause 'chaos' rather than simply making the claim and moving on.
- consider the accurate definition of agape is 'charity' or 'kindness' rather than sexual, friendly or familial love.

Q.2 This was the most popular question in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- provided a brief introduction that outlined Bentham's approach and then built upon how Mill had changed it and what he had retained.
- took a very methodical approach, including Rule, Harm principle and higher and lower pleasures, explaining each in turn.
- provided examples to illustrate Mill's Utilitarianism without becoming sidetracked by them.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- consider the necessity of lower pleasures for life (rather than being something bad or evil) which can sometimes be sacrificed for higher pleasures.
- differentiate between Rule Utilitarianism and the quality of pleasure rather than conflating them.
- avoid getting side tracked by detailed application examples that do not demonstrate the main features of Mill's Utilitarianism.
- understand 'Rule' as grounded in teleology and based in historical reflections.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- engaged with the question and considered carefully what would be practical to use in real life.
- clearly focused on what makes an ethical theory practical and then unpacked whether Utilitarianism met the criteria.
- considered how Mill and Bentham's approaches might generate different answers.
- made excellent use of both scholars and worked examples effectively to illustrate how useful or usable it would be in real life. Tyranny of the majority was mentioned regularly, but also Nozick's Pleasure Machine and Utility Monster. The happiness pump, Ursula Le Guinn's 'The Ones Who Walk Away from the Omelas', moral burn out, etc.
- analysed and evaluated what choices there really are to govern individual and social morality.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- develop an understanding of the meaning of the word 'practical'.
- consider what 'normative' means and differentiate between normative and 'absolutist'.
- avoid getting into discussions about nuclear weapons or animal testing at the expense of the actual question.
- try to avoid a grand tour of analysis and evaluation of all the ethical theories to decide if the others are more practical at the expense of the question.
- aim to give supportive reasoning for judgements, pointing out why one view is more convincing than another.

Section B

Q.3 This was the second most popular question in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- understood Proportionalism as a deontological / teleological hybrid which attempted to interpret Aquinas' Natural Law with more emphasis on the teleological elements.
- grasped the range of ways that Proportionalists might interpret 'proportionate reason'.
- appreciated the Proportionalist emphasis on the absolute goodness of the precepts whilst balancing these goods with other complex elements of morality, such as consequences, character, intention and virtue.
- could demonstrate how double effect and other key concepts from Aquinas' Natural Law have been reinterpreted.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- try to differentiate between Finnis and Proportionalism as completely separate developments of Natural Law.
- avoid using capital punishment or migration as examples of 'double effect', which they are not.
- focus on the elements of Proportionalism rather than simply explaining Aquinas' Natural Law.
- gain a clear understanding of the principle of 'double effect' and how Proportionalists have developed this from Aquinas.
- understand that Proportionalism is not an atheistic or secular approach to ethics. It is firmly grounded in an understanding of Aquinas' Natural Law.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- understood that Proportionalism aims to solve the difficulties of Aquinas' Natural Law by allowing direct evil acts if there is a proportionate reason to do so.
- challenged Proportionalism using Papal statements or Catholic objections.
- could appreciate the difference between 'right' and 'good' acts for Proportionalists and that proportionate reason was not simply allowing any act for any reason.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- focus on the question and avoid being sidetracked by extended examples of application that do not then relate back to the question.
- focus on an analysis and evaluation of Proportionalism instead of Finnis or Aquinas.
- consider how to use worked examples, so that they briefly illustrate a strength or weakness and do not become the focus of the whole essay.

Q.4 This was the most popular question in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- included a range of scholarly approaches including Moore, Pritchard and Ross, demonstrating the range of ways they viewed intuition.
- used specialist vocabulary such as ‘cognitive’ and ‘innate’ accurately.
- used Moore’s example of the colour ‘yellow’ and his criticisms against Naturalism.
- included Pritchard’s assessment of ‘ought’ as the object of intuition and his general vs moral thinking.
- identified Ross’ prima facie duties as being known through intuition.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- learn to differentiate between Moore and Pritchard’s approaches; Moore focusing on knowledge of ‘good’ as the object of intuition, and Pritchard focusing on what one ought to do.
- recognise that Intuitionism is presented as a cognitive approach that is not subjective and not a matter of opinion.
- avoid muddling Intuitionism with Emotivism and presenting intuition as a feeling we have that is non-cognitive or meaningless.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- made effective comparisons with Naturalism, Divine Command Theory and Emotivism, without getting distracted by evaluating them at the expense of the question.
- made use of a range of scholarship to support their responses.
- could offer alternative explanations for apparent intuition and show how this limited the success of the theory.
- identified and used other scholars, such as Warnock and Mackie, who have challenged Intuitionism.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- focus of the question and avoid describing of all the other meta ethical theories.
- understand that Emotivism does not claim to know anything through emotional responses, nor claim any factual information.
- be cautious about treating Intuitionism as a normative theory, since it considers how to understand the meaning / origin of moral language rather than give any instructions about behaviour.

Q.5 This was the least popular question in this section.

(a) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- provided thorough explanations of Sartre that included referent to the gap, existence preceded essence, en soi and pour soi, the waiter and bad faith (mauvaise foi).
- included equally detailed explanations of Rogers with reference to congruence, unconditional positive regard, ideal and actual self, as well as self-actualisation and fully functioning persons.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- pay careful attention to the question and only write about the scholarly areas that are required by the question (Sartre and Rogers were expected but other philosophical and psychological approaches that argue for free will were acceptable).
- understand that libertarianism is not a normative theory and so does not say we 'should' do anything. It merely attempts to describe our state.
- avoid irrelevant scholars such as Sirigu, Pelagius and Locke in this question.

(b) What worked well – characteristics of successful responses:

- recognised that the question asked if someone who was free should embrace their freedom by doing anything they like or choose to limit their own freedom to within the confines of a set of ethical principles.
- paid attention to the word 'specific' in the question and explored whether a particular ethic should be chosen or whether one can create one's own.
- provided insightful answers, which considered the idea that we might create our own morals and thus our own sense of appropriate normative ethics.
- many weighed up how normative ethics might cause a person to feel guilty if they 'failed' to live up to them and thus bring about incongruence.
- made insightful links with the work of Stirner within Egoism and considered 'ownness' as crucial to making ethical decisions.

The main areas of improvement needed for less successful responses:

- focus on the question set and avoid simply analysing and evaluating different normative theories of ethics to decide which is best.
- gain a clear understanding the term 'moral agent' to mean 'person who has the cognitive ability to make a decision about good and bad behaviour.' as opposed to 'an already good person who follows a prescribed ethical theory'.
- read the question carefully to avoid misreading the question and instead focusing on 'whether determined agents should follow normative ethics'.
- avoid weighing up determinism vs free will.
- be careful not to treat libertarianism as a normative theory that 'should' or 'should not' be followed.
- read the question carefully to avoid focusing on whether determined agents should follow normative ethics.

Supporting you

Useful contacts and links

Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

Tel: **029 2240 4274**

Email: **GCEReligiousStudies@eduqas.co.uk**

Qualification webpage: [AS and A Level Religious Studies | Eduqas](#)

See other useful contacts here: [Useful Contacts | Eduqas](#)

CPD Training / Professional Learning

Access our popular, free online CPD/PL courses to receive exam feedback and put questions to our subject team, and attend one of our face-to-face events, focused on enhancing teaching and learning, providing practical classroom ideas and developing understanding of marking and assessment.

Please find details for all our courses here: <https://www.eduqas.co.uk/home/professional-learning/>

Regional Rep Team

Our regional team covers all areas of England and can provide face-to-face and online advice at a time which is convenient to you.

Get in contact today and discover how our team can support you and your students.

[Regional Support Team | Eduqas](#)

Eduqas Qualifications

We are one of the largest providers of qualifications for schools, academies, sixth form and further education colleges across England, offering valued qualifications to suit a range of abilities. Each and every one of our qualifications is carefully designed to engage students and to equip them for the next stage of their lives.

We support our education communities by providing trusted qualifications and specialist support, to allow our students the opportunity to reach their full potential.



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