



**General Certificate of Education  
June 2012**

**Religious Studies**

**RST4A**

**Life, Death and Beyond OR Perceptions of  
Ultimate Reality OR Religious Experience**

**A2 Unit 4A**

**Final**

***Mark Scheme***

Mark schemes are prepared by the Principal Examiner and considered, together with the relevant questions, by a panel of subject teachers. This mark scheme includes any amendments made at the standardisation meeting attended by all examiners and is the scheme which was used by them in this examination. The standardisation meeting ensures that the mark scheme covers the students' responses to questions and that every examiner understands and applies it in the same correct way. As preparation for the standardisation meeting each examiner analyses a number of students' scripts: alternative answers not already covered by the mark scheme are discussed at the meeting and legislated for. If, after this meeting, examiners encounter unusual answers which have not been discussed at the meeting they are required to refer these to the Principal Examiner.

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## Examination Levels of Response

### Religious Studies (Advanced) A2 Level Descriptors

Level	A2 Descriptor AO1	Marks <i>Unit 4 italics</i>	A2 Descriptor AO2	Marks <i>Unit 4 italics</i>	A2 Descriptors for Quality of Written Communication in AO1 and AO2
<b>7</b>	A thorough treatment of the topic, which may be in depth or breadth. Information is accurate and relevant. A thorough understanding is shown through good use of relevant evidence and examples. Where appropriate good knowledge and understanding of diversity of views and / or scholarly opinion is demonstrated. Knowledge and understanding of connections with other elements of the course of study are demonstrated convincingly.	<b>28-30</b> <b>41-45</b>	A very well-focused response to the issue(s) raised. Different views, including where appropriate those of scholars or schools of thought, are discussed and evaluated perceptively. Effective use is made of evidence to sustain an argument. Systematic analysis and reasoning leads to appropriate conclusions. There may be evidence of independent thought. The argument is related perceptively and maturely to the broader context and to human experience.	<b>19-20</b> <b>28-30</b>	Appropriate form and style of writing; clear and coherent organisation of information; appropriate and accurate use of specialist vocabulary; good legibility and high level of accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
<b>6</b>	A generally thorough treatment of the topic which may be in depth or breadth. Information is almost all accurate and mainly relevant. Clear understanding is demonstrated through use of relevant evidence and examples. Where appropriate, alternative views and / or scholarly opinion are satisfactorily explained. Knowledge and understanding of connections with other elements of the course of study are clearly demonstrated.	<b>24-27</b> <b>36-40</b>	A well-focused response to the issue(s) raised. Different views, including where appropriate those of scholars or schools of thought, are discussed. A process of reasoning leads to an appropriate evaluation. There may be evidence of independent thought. The argument is related clearly to the broader context and to human experience.	<b>16-18</b> <b>24-27</b>	
<b>5</b>	A satisfactory treatment of the topic. Information is mostly accurate and mainly relevant. A reasonable understanding is demonstrated through use of some evidence and examples. Where appropriate, some familiarity with diversity of views and / or scholarly opinion is shown. Some knowledge and understanding of connections with other elements of the course of study are demonstrated.	<b>20-23</b> <b>29-35</b>	A satisfactory response to the issue(s) raised. Views are explained with some supporting evidence and arguments, and some critical analysis. A conclusion is drawn that follows from some of the reasoning. Some of the response is related satisfactorily to the broader context and to human experience.	<b>13-15</b> <b>20-23</b>	Mainly appropriate form and style of writing; generally clear and coherent organisation of information; mainly appropriate and accurate use of specialist vocabulary; good legibility and fairly high level of accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
<b>4</b>	Key ideas and facts are included; demonstrates some understanding and coherence using some evidence and examples. Where appropriate, brief reference may be made to alternative views and / or scholarly opinion. Limited knowledge and understanding of connections with other elements of the course of study are demonstrated.	<b>15-19</b> <b>22-28</b>	The main issue is addressed with some supporting evidence or argument, but the reasoning is faulty, or the analysis superficial or only one view is adequately considered. Little of the response is related to the broader context and to human experience.	<b>10-12</b> <b>15-19</b>	Form and style of writing appropriate in some respects; some of the information is organised clearly and coherently; some appropriate and accurate use of specialist vocabulary; satisfactory legibility and level of accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
<b>3</b>	A summary of key points. Limited in depth or breadth. Answer may show limited understanding and limited relevance. Some coherence.	<b>10-14</b> <b>15-21</b>	A basic attempt to justify a point of view relevant to the question. Some explanation of ideas and coherence.	<b>7-9</b> <b>10-14</b>	
<b>2</b>	A superficial outline account, with little relevant material and slight signs of partial understanding, or an informed answer that misses the point of the question.	<b>5-9</b> <b>8-14</b>	A superficial response to the question with some attempt at reasoning.	<b>4-6</b> <b>5-9</b>	Little clarity and organisation; little appropriate and accurate use of specialist vocabulary; legibility and level of accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar barely adequate to make meaning clear.
<b>1</b>	Isolated elements of partly accurate information little related to the question.	<b>1-4</b> <b>1-7</b>	A few basic points, with no supporting argument or justification.	<b>1-3</b> <b>1-4</b>	
<b>0</b>	Nothing of relevance.	<b>0</b>	No attempt to engage with the question or nothing of relevance	<b>0</b>	

## **Section A Life, Death and Beyond**

### **Question 1**

<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
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**Examine religious and secular perspectives on the value of human life.**

Students may take a depth approach and refer to one religion only, or take a breadth approach and refer to more than one, but watch for unfocused generalisations. 'Human life' may be interpreted in different ways – e.g. an individual life, human as distinct from other life forms such as animal, and this life – in which case value may be expressed as importance.

Examination requires the students to explore the ideas, that is they must state them then unpack what they mean with reasons, examples or illustration.  
A simple statement of ideas with some examples - Max level 4

Religious: e.g. sanctity of life in the image of God; held in trust for God and to be protected and spiritually developed on his behalf; highest element in creation – superiority to animals often stressed; valued from the moment of conception in some views; worth of an individual life related to beliefs and actions, hence distinction between the righteous and the sinner; gender, race and disability often, but not always, considered irrelevant to worth; this human life lacks ultimate value and may be sacrificed when necessary in service of the higher good.

Secular: e.g. utilitarian value according to the degree to which the life generates or experiences happiness, or of equal value based on a common humanity; value compared to animals variously debated, some accepting equality of rights with other animals; valued according to contribution to life; individual political or social theories value one type or quality of human being over another – e.g. Nietzsche's superman vs the herd, or the Nazi Aryan over others.

Answers dealing with only one of secular or religious – Max level 5

**(45 marks)**

**AO1**

<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>
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**'Religious views about the value of life have no relevance in today's largely secular society.' How far do you agree?**

Students may consider some of the following:

Relevance to believers can be evidenced through the way such views affect their lives and sense of vocation – e.g. pro-life supporters; pacifists.

The idea that value or worth lies in something that is observable by others (e.g. contribution to life) or in an innate sense of 'fairness' based on a shared humanity may appear to make religious ideas redundant. However, they still have a significant impact in discussions about moral issues such as abortion / euthanasia and genetic engineering, in that way they are relevant to society as a whole regardless of their truth / falsity because of their impact.

The consequences of seeing a life as only having extrinsic value (which gives power to those who decide what makes a human life valuable) may mean that religious views about the intrinsic value of each life are a very valuable counter balance.

Some students may choose to consider if the description of 'largely secular' is valid.

**(30 marks)**

**AO2**

**Question 2****0****3****Examine religious and non-religious views of death and beyond.**

There are four tasks here – religious and non-religious views of death, religious and non-religious views of beyond death, but these may be conflated in the answer.

Students may take a depth approach and refer to one religion only, or take a breadth approach and refer to more than one, but watch for unfocused generalisations.

Examination requires the students to explore the ideas, that is they must state them then unpack what they mean with reasons, examples or illustration.

A simple statement of ideas with some examples - Max level 4

Religious: e.g. death a transition experience within a longer existence. The transition may be instant or delayed and there may be an in-between state e.g. Barzakh or Bardo. The whole being may die and await resurrection / re-creation, or the body only, with the 'soul' departing for a new life. Treatment of the body after death can reflect these differing views. There are differing views about how the personal identity continues beyond death—e.g. physical resurrection and spiritual resurrection, rebirth and reincarnation.

Non-religious: e.g. death is the end; any sense of beyond death lies in objective immortality: the continuity of genes; memories others have of you or contribution to life. Being non-religious does not entail rejection of life after death – secular views (e.g. spiritualism – when it is divorced from religion) can include idea of continuing personal existence. Beyond death may be regarded as wishful thinking and / or philosophically incoherent. There may be attempts to defeat death (e.g. Cryonics – the preservation of body or head in expectation that it will be revived and 'cured' in the future.)

All four elements must be considered for marks above Level 5.

**(45 marks)****AO1****0****4****'The purpose of life is to prepare for death.' Assess this view.**

Students may refer to one or more religions in their answers.

The claim suggests that this life has an instrumental importance in that it allows people to prepare for the life to come. This can be supported with reference to various religious traditions, including those that advocate self-sacrifice, withdrawal from society and self – denial. Even if the actions of this life are not linked to judgement, heaven and hell, the idea that death is inevitable, and that we know not when it may come, mean that some people 'live each day as if it is their last' or ensure that their contribution to life is a positive one. Pascal's wager is also relevant.

Counter views may stress the intrinsic value of living for its own sake, or to work for happiness /contentment in this life given the uncertainty of a life to come. This is not uniquely a secular view. Emphasis in Judaism is often on this life rather than the life to come. Some Buddhists interpret the realms of re-birth as metaphors for different qualities of human existence here and now, and are agnostic about the existence of an afterlife. Atheist existentialist views about the meaninglessness and absurdity of life are also relevant. Alternative views about the purpose of life (e.g. procreation.)

**(30 marks)****AO2**

## **Section B Perceptions of Ultimate Reality**

### **Question 3**

0
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5
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**Examine different understandings of the human situation in relation to God/Ultimate Reality.**

Students may take a depth approach and refer to one religion only, or take a breadth approach and refer to more than one, but watch for unfocused generalisations. They may, but need not, refer to secular views.

Examination requires the students to explore the ideas, that is they must state them then unpack what they mean with reasons, examples or illustration.

A simple statement of ideas with some examples - Max level 4

Many different ideas may be explored depending on the religion(s) chosen: e.g.

- the servant of God, created to worship him, living under judgement;
- an expression of God's nature / image of God
- fallen / sinful / imperfect
- dependent / conditioned existence
- free / pre-destined;
- part of ultimate reality / divided from union with God /Ultimate reality only by the strength of illusion or ignorance. This can be evidenced from the mystical traditions of many religions;

**(45 marks)**

**AO1**

0
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6
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**'Beliefs about God/Ultimate Reality have a negative impact on the way in which people live their lives.' How far do you agree?**

Students may consider some of the following:

- resignation / acceptance of God's will can lead to passivity in the face of suffering;
- mental health can be disturbed by fear of judgement – possible reference to Freud
- focus on afterlife rather than this life can distort values (e.g. money spent on mausoleums)
- conservation efforts may be resisted by those hoping for the imminent end of time;
- terrorism is justified by some as God's will;
- inter-religious conflict has threatened stability in many areas;

Beliefs may only affect those who hold them

There may be reference disbelief in God/Ultimate Reality

The idea of God has inspired people to great works;

Ideas about God motivate moral action;

The belief in an eventual union with God enables many to cope with life;

Personal relationships with God cannot be quantified but inspire joy in many;

**(30 marks)**

**AO2**

**Question 4****0****7**

**Examine the ways in which human understanding of God/Ultimate Reality is expressed in religious language, art and symbols.**

Students may take a depth approach and refer to one religion only, or take a breadth approach and refer to more than one, but watch for unfocused generalisations.

Examination requires the students to explore the ideas, that is they must state them then unpack what they mean with reasons, examples or illustration.

A simple statement of ideas with some examples - Max level 4

The focus must be on understandings of God /Ultimate Reality in words and art – not on religious language and religious art and symbolism in general.

Religious language e.g. analogy, via negativa and language games, with examples

Religious art (any form of art) – e.g. representations of 'God' in human form or God as a character in literature.

Symbol – these may be literary or visual. E.g. shepherd, light,

For answers which do not cover all three aspects - Max level 5

**(45 marks)****AO1****0****8**

**'Attempts to express ideas about God/Ultimate Reality are meaningful only for the believer.' Assess this claim.**

Students may relate this to religious language alone or to the three ways of expressing ideas about God given in 07 – language, art and symbol. There are various ways to approach this question. For example some may analyse what, if anything, might give a believer privileged access to meaningfulness, while others focus on the general criteria for meaningfulness of religious language.

Students may include some of the following:

Language claims about God have no meaning for those demanding a means of empirical verification or falsification for such claims.

Some explanations of religious language imply that belief is necessary to understanding – e.g. to understand the rules of the language game of religion you need to play the game (although that may not require belief). Symbols, according to Paul Tillich, participate in the reality they represent – if that participation is not evident to a non-believer the symbolism has no or only limited meaning.

It can be argued that the meaningfulness of the word 'God' come from experience of God, and that without such experience the word remains meaningless (analogous to understanding the word 'red'). Anselm argues that those who deny that God exists know only the word God, not God Himself.

Some works of art also require 'decoding' before they can be understood, although knowledge rather than faith appears to be the pre-requisite here.

However both language and art make use of universal symbols and the evocative strength of both can precede faith, and even stimulate / give rise to it through conversion or other religious experiences. May be better to say that certain dimensions of the words or art are shut off from those lacking faith – especially true for those who believe that scripture mediates Ultimate Reality rather than just being about it.

**(30 marks)****AO2**

## **Section C Religious Experience**

### **Question 5**

<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>
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**Examine what may be meant by the term ‘religious experience’.**

Examination requires the students to explore the ideas, that is they must state them then unpack what they mean with reasons, examples or illustration.

A simple statement of ideas with some examples - Max level 4

Students may offer classifications of religious experience such as that offered by Swinburne, or Caroline Franks Davies, or concentrate on the idea of an encounter with the numinous. They may also consider the possibility that ordinary experiences become religious simply when they are interpreted that way. St Teresa’s threefold test for such experiences may be referred to, along with the classification of different types of ‘vision’ – corporeal, imaginative and intellectual;

Answers that deal only with types of religious experience – Max level 5.

**(45 marks) AO1**

<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
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**‘Religious experiences make it difficult for religion to be taken seriously.’  
How far do you agree?**

Students may consider who might find it difficult to take religion seriously because of religious experiences – other believers or non-believers?

Points that may be made include:

Psychology in particular, and scepticism in general, have undermined many previously held certainties about such experiences. St Teresa’s ecstasy has been attributed to repressed sexuality, visions to imagination or mental illness, and the conflicting claims of those who receive ‘revelation’ have diminished their value. Temporal lobe epilepsy is accepted by some as an explanation for many apparently ‘religious’ experiences; there are also theological problems in any view that sees God singling out individuals to speak to them alone. Even among believers some claims to have had a religious experience are treated with great suspicion.

However, in some traditions personal religious experience is central – e.g. charismatic churches; contemplative monastic orders, Sufism;  
The impact of a religious experience may be the main reason why some believers take it seriously – e.g. conversion experiences  
Meditation is central to Buddhism – and has considerable popular appeal, although its designation as ‘religious’ is debated;

**(30 marks) AO2**



**Question 6**

1

1

**Examine the role of religious experience as a source of religious practice and of good religious behaviour.**

Students may take a depth approach and refer to one religion only, or take a breadth approach and refer to more than one, but watch for unfocused generalisations.

Examination requires the students to explore the ideas, that is they must state them then unpack what they mean with reasons, examples or illustration.

A simple statement of ideas with some examples - Max level 4

Practice: e.g. styles of worship; dress; ritual.

Good behaviour: e.g. moral conduct.

Religious experience may be the source of the information/instructions on which these are based or a guiding force within the activity – e.g. the Holy Spirit within charismatic worship or the conscience within the moral agent. Students should be able to trace the progression from the source to current practice(s) / behaviour, and may explore reasons for differences within practice / behaviour. Top level answers will show awareness that this can be a complex matter.

Students may distinguish between religious practice and good religious behaviour in a variety of ways. For answers dealing with only one practice / behaviour max level 5.

**(45 marks)****AO1**

1

2

**‘Religious experiences are a valid and reliable source of faith.’  
How far do you agree?**

Students may consider this statement within the context of one or more religion(s) and / or as part of the debate between religion and the secular world. They may consider the meaning of ‘faith’ and may, or may not, distinguish between ‘valid’ and ‘reliable’.

Points that may be made include:

Within many religious traditions core religious experiences (e.g. the revelation of the Qur’an) are taken as both valid and reliable. Scripture may receive its authority from beliefs about its revelation; Claims about (e.g.) God, Nirvana, judgement and the afterlife, seem to rely solely on religious experience for their authority.

However, religions reject the authority of the revelation experiences underpinning other religions just on the basis of their content, even when they are apparently very similar in style. Within religions some individuals mistrust the claims others make on the basis of their experience and dispute those recorded in scripture seeing them as misunderstood natural experiences. Some regard reason as the greater authority and assess each reported experience on that basis. Even if some accept that religious experiences would be valid as a source of faith if they happened, they could then dispute the claim that they are reliable – e.g. unless they come to order, any guidance they give might not be at the right time.

**(30 marks)****AO2**