

A-LEVEL

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

RST4C Religious Authority

OR Ways of Moral Decision-Making

OR Ways of Reading and Understanding Scripture

Mark scheme

2060

June 2014

Version: 1.0 Final

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

It must be stressed that a mark scheme is a working document, in many cases further developed and expanded on the basis of students' reactions to a particular paper. Assumptions about future mark schemes on the basis of one year's document should be avoided; whilst the guiding principles of assessment remain constant, details will change, depending on the content of a particular examination paper.

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Examination Levels of Response

Religious Studies (Advanced) A2 Level Descriptors

<i>Level</i>	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
7	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.	28-30 41-45	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 critically analysed perceptively. Effective use is made of evidence to sustain an argument. Appropriate evaluation is fully supported by the reasoning. There may be evidence of independent thought. The argument is related perceptively and maturely to the broader context and to human experience.	19-20 28-30	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.
6	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.	24-27 36-40	A well-focused response to the issue(s) raised. Different views, including where appropriate those of scholars or schools of thought, are discussed and critically analysed. Appropriate evaluation is supported by reasoned argument. There may be evidence of independent thought. The argument is related clearly to the broader context and to human experience.	16-18 24-27	
5	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.	20-23 29-35	A satisfactory response to the issue(s) raised. Views are explained with some supporting evidence and arguments, and some critical analysis. An evaluation is made that is consistent with some of the reasoning. Some of the response is related satisfactorily to the broader context and to human experience.	13-15 20-23	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.
4	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.	15-19 22-28	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.	10-12 15-19	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.
3	A summary of key points. Limited in depth or breadth. Answer may show limited understanding and limited relevance. Some coherence.	10-14 15-21	A basic attempt to justify a point of view relevant to the question. Some explanation of ideas and coherence.	7-9 10-14	
2	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.	5-9 8-14	A superficial response to the question with some attempt at reasoning.	4-6 5-9	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.
1	Isolated elements of partly accurate information little related to the question.	1-4 1-7	A few basic points, with no supporting argument or justification.	1-3 1-4	
0	Nothing of relevance.	0	No attempt to engage with the question or nothing of relevance	0	

Section A *Religious Authority*

Question 1

0	1
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Examine different sources of religious authority and how their authority is used.

Different sources of religious authority might include, for example, God, religious leaders, religious institutions, reason, conscience, religious experience and so on. Examination of these sources, and the use of their authority, will depend upon the religious tradition being discussed and upon where the emphasis of the discussion is placed. The exercise of scriptural authority, for example, depends on the degree of authority afforded it within a religion, and that can vary considerably from group to group. In Islam, for example, the scriptural authority of Qur'an and Hadith are developed and exercised through Shari'ah and Sunnah, through ijmah, qiyas and ijtihad, and through the teaching and guidance of the mullah, imam and ayatollah. A literalist understanding of scripture has all sorts of implications for the nature of private and public worship, for the maintenance of orthodoxy, and for political influence. There are many different angles from which students might approach this question.

Where students do not address both aspects of the question, responses will be limited to Level 5.

[45 marks] AO1

0	2
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'All sources of religious authority depend upon each other.' Evaluate this claim.

In support of this claim, one likely response is that all sources of religious authority are interdependent in the sense that they have a common source in God or Ultimate Reality: the various manifestations of authority being different perceptions of the same source. God might be experienced personally or transcendentally through religious experience, or as Truth which is either being or non-being, or as manifested in the authority of eternal law, and so on. The authority of religious leaders in the theistic religions might be seen as dependent on scripture, God, tradition, and the religious institutions of which they are members.

Some might argue that some sources of religious authority are independent rather than interdependent, for example the authority of reason might be seen as deriving from an independent moral faculty given to humans by God; the authority of religious leaders might be seen as self-assumed for personal or political reasons; the authority of religious tradition might be seen as accumulated purely through custom, over time. Some might argue that God's authority does not depend on anything, but instead underpins all the rest. Alternatively some might suggest that God's authority has to be spread by scripture, tradition, and teachers, for example.

For Levels 6 and 7, some attention needs to be paid to the word 'all'.

[30 marks] AO2

Question 2**0****3****Examine challenges to religious authority from scriptural interpretation and criticism.**

Challenges from scriptural criticism might be said to derive from the kinds of analysis undertaken by literary, text, form and redaction criticism, where the challenge might be identified in different ways. For example, the form-critical challenge is principally in its assertion that many parts of scripture have been modified considerably during the transmission from spoken units to written traditions. Similarly the process of editing different religious texts in all religious traditions often uncovers variant textual traditions, different schools of interpretation and different levels of religious understanding. For some, these differences are part and parcel of the ongoing process of scriptural interpretation; for others, they are an indication of invention, assumption, and the expansion of processes that have their origins in human considerations rather than in God or some underlying Ultimate Reality. There is no requirement for students to make any artificial separation between interpretation and criticism, since these are frequently part and parcel of the same process. Whichever aspects students focus upon, the emphasis needs to be on the challenges to religious *authority*, for example to the authority of religious teachers, of different schools of interpretation, of specific religious doctrines, and so on. For example, within Judaism, Christianity and Islam there are significant differences of interpretation of the narratives concerning the origins of humanity, and these form a distinct challenge to religious authority where it is accepted that the scriptural record is incompatible with evolutionary biology.

Students may treat scriptural interpretation and criticism either as one subject or two.

[45 marks]**AO1****0****4****‘Religious authority can overcome any challenge.’ How far do you agree?**

The focus of the question is not simply on identifying challenges to religious authority but on the statement that religious authority can *overcome* all such challenges. With scientific challenges, for example, modern cosmology challenges a literalist understanding of scriptural accounts of creation, and thus challenges the authority of scripture as a source of scientific knowledge, but religious philosophers / theologians might respond that religion can adapt to this challenge by accepting that religious accounts are dealing with the meaning of existence rather than the mechanism by which things came into being. Others might claim that scriptural inspiration is a sufficient basis on which to reject even scientific challenges.

The scope of this question is wider than that of Question 03, so students are at liberty to consider any challenges to religious authority, and not just those made by scriptural interpretation and criticism. General challenges to religious authority might be identified in philosophical challenges to the existence (and thereby the authority) of God; in scientific challenges to the authority of specific religious doctrines such as the creation of the universe and of humanity; in rational challenges to the authority of religious figures who claim inspired / traditional / devolved authority to interpret religious doctrines, and so on.

[30 marks]**AO2**

Section B *Ways of Moral Decision-Making*

Question 3

0	5	Examine how religious teachings may help people to determine good and bad, right and wrong.
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This should be marked globally, with no enforced separation between ‘good and bad’ / ‘right and wrong’, although some may do this.

Students are at liberty to interpret ‘religious teachings’ in different ways, for example religious teachings from scripture, from specific religious sects/denominations/churches, from religious leaders, from religious tradition, etc. Most are likely to consider specific teachings from Natural Law Ethics, Divine Command Theory, Situation Ethics, the religious ethic of the Qur’an and Hadith, of the Torah, Mishnah and Gemara, and so on. There is no requirement to consider how religious teachings apply to the specific issues of medical research and developments / business practice and economics listed in the Specification, although these would of course be entirely relevant.

The precise ways in which religious teachings might be said to *help* people to determine good and bad, right and wrong, are also left to students’ discretion. Some might argue, for example, that God’s ethical commands recorded in scripture help people to determine good and bad, etc., by formulating absolute rules which the believer simply needs to obey. Others might claim that religious teachings help by offering moral guidance in the form of parables, prophecies, wise sayings and the like. Some might argue that religion advocates a guiding principle such as *agape* in Situation Ethics, by which believers are free to apply that principle differently, depending on the situation. Religious teachings might also be said to help people determine good and bad, right and wrong, even where there is an *absence* of religious belief, since such teachings might be accepted culturally even in the absence of specific metaphysical beliefs.

[45 marks] **AO1**

0

6

‘The best guide to moral decision-making is the religious conscience.’ Assess this claim.

This could be taken in different ways. Some might interpret the question to be asking for a comparison between the *religious* conscience as a guide to behaviour as opposed to conscience defined through psychology, sociology or evolution, for example. If the conscience is understood as a combination of psychological, sociological and evolutionary developments, for example, then there is no guarantee that an evolved conscience is the *best* guide to people’s behaviour: psychological and social traits that aid survival might be less desirable guides to behaviour than an educated religious conscience.

A broader understanding of the question would be a discussion of the efficacy of the religious conscience as a behavioural guide by comparison with, for example, deontological, teleological or hybrid systems in general. Some might argue that the conscience has priority as the voice of God, or as the God-given faculty of reason; others might reject this as too subjective by comparison with objective criteria for guiding people’s behaviour, such as religious or utilitarian rules. Different religions have different emphasis on such points. In Islam, for example, it is generally not the self that is held to be the best judge of and guide to right and wrong, since belief in the punishment of hell or the reward of paradise is too important to leave the fate of the individual to subjective human understanding without the help of revelation.

[30 marks]

AO2

Question 4

0

7

Examine the use of hybrid ethical systems with reference to either medical research and medical developments or business practice and economics.

The emphasis in the marking should be on clear evidence that the hybrid character of the systems students are referring to is explained in the answer.

Students might identify a number of different systems as being hybrid, but it needs to be clear from definition, or from the general tenor of students' answers, why any particular system referred to is 'hybrid'. For example, where students assume that Rule Utilitarianism is a hybrid, answers would need to indicate both the deontological and the teleological features of Rule Utilitarianism. Examining the use of such systems should be primarily within the context of either medical research and developments or business practice and economics. Most students will assume that Virtue Ethics is a hybrid system, and while this is debatable, it is acceptable here. Some might argue that Roman Catholic Natural Law is a hybrid system in so far as its deontological approach also has teleological features such as the principle of Double Effect, together with the fact that the *telos* of ethical action is union with God. Similarly it might be claimed that although Kant put forward a deontological system, it also has teleological features, such as the kingdom of moral ends and the summum bonum. Accept such judgements as indicating a hybrid system. The focus of the question is on the *use* of hybrid ethical systems, so students might examine how hybrids deal with issues such as the use of embryos, medical trials on humans, the use of animals for medical research, etc., or else issues in business ethics such as the developing and emerging economies.

Max. Level 4 where students refer to hybrid systems but do not apply them to medical or business issues, or where students refer to medical or business issues without reference to hybrid ethical systems.

[45 marks]

AO1

0

8

'Hybrid ethical systems can solve any moral issue'. Evaluate this claim.

Students might agree with the claim on the grounds that hybrid ethical systems combine deontological and teleological features, and so are flexible and adaptable. Others might disagree on the grounds that hybrid theories either pay insufficient attention to moral rules or insufficient attention to the consequences of actions.

Some might argue that no ethical system can solve all ethical issues, since there are no convincing arguments to show that ethics is (or should be) primarily deontological, or teleological, or hybrid, or religious. If hybrid systems are described as those which combine deontological and teleological features, then some might argue that Virtue Ethics is a third/alternative system which focuses instead on the moral agent. Much of the argument concerns definition, and the examiners will accept any definitions that are reasonable. As to whether hybrid systems can solve any moral issue, some might argue that flexible systems such as Multi-Level Utilitarianism or Christian Situation Ethics can solve any moral issue, but there might still remain the question of whether or not the solution is favoured by everybody, which seems unlikely, to say the least.

Students are therefore likely to give some thought as to what might constitute a 'solution' to a moral issue. Does a solution have to be acceptable to everyone, or perhaps to a majority? Can any ethical issue have an acceptable solution where, by definition, the different theories give different answers? Some might conclude that *any* system, hybrid or otherwise, can solve moral issues, but no system can give an answer that is universally accepted.

[30 marks]

AO2

Section C *Ways of Reading and Understanding Scripture*

Question 5

0	9	Examine what the scriptures of one religion teach about how and why humans should behave in a particular way.
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For the 'how' element of the question, scripture regulates conduct in many different ways. Ethically, it prescribes general principles and specific rules about moral conduct. These are not necessarily the same for all humans, but they are prescriptive in different ways. In Buddhism, for example, scriptural rules are not arranged into an all-embracing meta-ethical scheme of the kind attempted in western ethical systems. The principles in Buddhism differ when they are applied to the laity or to the Sangha: for the latter, the number of rules is different for males and females, and the rules in the Vinaya are divided into different groups, each laying down a specific penalty for breaking the rules, depending on the seriousness of the breach. In the theistic religions, scriptural rules cover human behaviour in worship, prayer, celebration, interaction with the world, law, politics, and so on. In Judaism, for example, the primary scriptural rules in Tenach are developed through Talmud – Gemara and Mishnah - together with ongoing interpretation by the rabbis to cover all aspects of behaviour in the world today.

For the 'why', the whole theistic approach is grounded in the 'why' of God as Creator and sustainer of the universe, in the nature of God / ethical monotheism, and in the relationship between ethical behaviour and the reward of heaven or the punishment of hell. In Buddhism, the *why* is found in the principles of the Buddha's precepts and the inter-relationship of all living things, as well as in the principle of rebirth conditioned by the *karmas*. Students are required to discuss such issues within the context of the scriptures of *one* religion.

[45 marks] AO1

1

0

‘Scriptural teachings about how humans should live their lives must be followed in every detail.’ How far do you agree?

Answers to this will depend on the approach to scripture in the religion selected and its sectarian / denominational subsets. In general terms, acceptance of scriptural teachings is entailed by belief in and membership of a particular religion, so following its doctrines and obeying its rules are part and parcel of religious behaviour as a whole, and is entailed by what believers understand about the nature of God / Ultimate Reality. Nevertheless it is true that all religions have considerable internal variations concerning the extent of their ‘canonical’ scriptures, their understanding in different schools of thought, and their interpretation by individuals. Since these cannot all be reconciled, all sorts of questions arise about the detailed requirements to follow scriptural teachings about living one’s life. In Islam, internal contradictions within scripture are reconciled by the principle of Abrogation, e.g. Surah 2:106:

None of Our revelations do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but We substitute something better or similar: Knowest thou not that Allah Hath power over all things? Those who accept that earlier verses have been abrogated do not follow them but might still see themselves as following the Qur’an in every detail. These issues are for students to explore.

Students might also apply the question to those who follow no religious belief, and might argue that scriptural teachings are likely to be both irrelevant and non-binding for atheists and agnostics on the grounds that religious belief systems are seen as non-scientific, as mere metaphysical speculation, and as being out-of-date in advocating rules that belong to earlier cultures. Some might argue that anybody who lives within a culture that has had a dominant religious background must perforce absorb some of its moral precepts, so that people living in the UK, for example, are likely to follow general scriptural rules such as the commandments, although this does not amount to following such teachings ‘in every detail’.

For Levels 6 and 7, the words ‘every detail’ need to be considered.

[30 marks]

AO2

Question 6

1	1	Examine ways in which people might study scriptures in order to gain full insight into their meaning.
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Students might refer to some of the following: study of scripture as literature in order to gain insight into the history of the tradition: who wrote it, when, and in what circumstances; study of the text itself in order to consider textual transmission in cases where the text might be / appear incomplete or incorrect, in order to reconstruct the 'original' text for study; study of the formal types underlying the written text in order to reconstruct those texts with a presumed oral prehistory; study of scripture to apply its contents to past, present and potential future situations; hermeneutical study to elicit the extended meaning of scripture; scriptural study through devotion, prayer and meditation; group study; private study; understanding scripture through reasoned inference, or through religious experience, and so on.

Students should give some attention to the phrase "to gain full insight into their meaning", which can operate on different levels. For example the study of scripture to apply its contents to past, present and potential future situations assumes that the meaning of scripture operates at different levels. This understanding is present in some Jewish and Christian interpretations of scripture. In Christianity, for example, the messianic texts of the Old Testament are reinterpreted in terms of Jesus and in terms of the arrival of the messianic kingdom, which have both a present and an eschatological focus. In Islam, some students might refer to the processes of *tafsir* and *ta'wil*, which aim to clarify the meaning of the Qur'an, along with the trend in Islamic philosophy which seeks to uncover esoteric as well as exoteric meaning in scripture.

[45 marks]**AO1**

1

2

‘Full insight into the meaning of scriptures can only be achieved with the help of scholars.’ How far do you agree?

This might be claimed, for example, by those with an academic background into the original language and the transmission of the scriptures. For those who do not understand the original language of any particular set of scriptures, this in itself can be a barrier to insight into their meaning. The academic disciplines of text, literary, form and redaction criticism can arguably be undertaken only by scholars whose skills enable them to be best placed to discover the meaning of the scriptures through translating, reconstructing, analysing and interpreting them.

Students might refer to the difference between gaining insight into one particular text, for example John’s Gospel, as opposed to a broad insight across the whole of a scriptural tradition. Without a broad-based understanding of a scriptural tradition, any kind of insight into single books, short passages, and religious ideas in general, would be difficult to achieve.

Whilst many would agree that academic scriptural analysis is beneficial, others however might argue that such analysis ends up by deconstructing the text and removing or destroying its meaning. This trend is visible in European scholarship from the 19th century on, where critical analysis contributed to atheistic / anti-religious trends in the 20th century.

Further, many would argue that scriptural hermeneutics are not confined to a single level of interpretation but function instead on many different levels, since the message of scripture is timeless, personal as well as collective, and devotional as well as doctrinal. An approach to scripture through prayer and meditation, for example, can develop personal insights for individuals which are beyond the scope of scholastic study.

Students might focus on the specific schools of interpretation in one or more religions, e.g. the role of rabbinical interpretation in Judaism and of the various schools of interpretation in Islam through hadith, qiyas, ijihad and ijmah. Some might argue that belief in God is misguided, so the help of scholars is of use only in interpreting the original context and meaning of scriptures, since there is no deeper or “full” meaning to uncover.

[30 marks]

AO2