

**A-LEVEL**

# **Religious Studies**

RST4A Life Death and Beyond OR  
Perceptions of Ultimate Reality OR  
Religious Experience  
Mark scheme

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2060  
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Version 1: Final

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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.

Further copies of this mark scheme are available from [aqa.org.uk](http://aqa.org.uk)

## Examination Levels of Response

### Religious Studies (Advanced) A2 Level Descriptors

<i>Level</i>	<b>A2 Descriptor AO1</b>	Marks <i>Unit 4 italics</i>	<b>A2 Descriptor AO2</b>	Marks <i>Unit 4 italics</i>	<b>A2 Descriptors for Quality of Written Communication in AO1 and AO2</b>
<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 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 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.	<b>19-20 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 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 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.	<b>16-18 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 29-35</b>	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.	<b>13-15 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 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 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 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 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 8-14</b>	A superficial response to the question with some attempt at reasoning.	<b>4-6 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 1-7</b>	A few basic points, with no supporting argument or justification.	<b>1-3 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

### Indicative content

**Note: This content is indicative rather than prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to all the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels of response.**

### Question 1

0	1	<b>Examine religious perspectives on the nature of human life.</b>
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The 'nature' of human life can refer to the nature of the human being (eg soul, spirit, body etc) and / or the human situation (eg fallen, sinful, redeemed, predestined). Students may refer to one or more religions, and may consider a range of ideas, for example: ever-changing combination of mental and physical energies (Buddhism); some combination of body and soul (the best answers will avoid generalisations here); created by God; made in God's image; mortal / an immortal soul / subject to rebirth or reincarnation; expression of karma and karma generating; fallen / sinful; free / determined / conditioned / predestined; unsatisfactory (eg Buddhist concept of Dukkha); linear and cyclical views; life as a test and life as soul-making.

Examination or unpacking of ideas may include, for example, consideration of: examples of thinkers / traditions who hold the views concerned; the foundation / sources on which these understandings are based, and similarities / differences between views within religions and the reasons for them (eg soul making and soul deciding theodicies, free will and predestination).

For marks above Level 5 more than one perspective must be dealt with such as two religions, two traditions within a religion or both the nature of a human being and of the human situation.

**[45 marks]      AO1**

0	2	<b>'Ideas about the nature of human life are of little importance to people today.'</b>
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**Discuss how far you agree.**

Secular ideas may be considered here alongside religious ones. They might consider how differing views of the nature of a human being are reflected in ethical debates about abortion, euthanasia and / or moral responsibility, and / or in customs surrounding death which often implicitly or explicitly reflect such views. They may consider the discussion of such matters in the media and / or popular science and consider their relevance in a materialistic society. Expressions of relevant ideas in art and literature may also be considered. Some may wish to argue that many of the particular ideas found in religion are ignored or sidelined but that secular alternatives replace them because the issues are inescapable.

**[30 marks]      AO2**

**Question 2**

<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>
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**Examine both religious and non-religious beliefs about life beyond death.**

**Religious beliefs:** Answers may refer to one or more religions, and a range of ideas may be considered. These may include, for example, the nature of such existence (eg embodied / disembodied), life immediately after death (eg Bardo and Barzakh) and / or at the end of time (eg final judgement); for Christianity there may be reference to Process thought and objective immortality alongside more traditional ideas, and ideas about rebirth / reincarnation may also be considered.

**Non-religious:** Answers may include for example: the view that there is no life beyond death; the belief that 'life after death' consists of genetic legacy and / or contribution to life – eg genes and memes; spiritualism.

Examination or unpacking of these ideas may include, for example: the use of precise examples of thinkers / traditions that hold the view concerned; consideration of the sources on which such views are based; reasons for differences of belief within religions / traditions or among secular thinkers.

Maximum Level 5 for answers which do not deal with both religious and non-religious beliefs

**[45 marks]      AO1**

<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>
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**'For those who believe in life beyond death, the present life is of little importance.'**

**Discuss how far you agree.**

The understanding of 'life beyond death' may, but need not, be as broad as in the first part of this question. Answers may discuss, for example, whether the view that this life is a preparation for the next, or a test to determine what happens after death, makes the present life important and, if so, to what extent. There may be some contrast between the 'passing' nature of present life and the 'eternal' life to come. Examples of self-sacrifice and martyrdom may be used to argue that the statement is correct, both process thought and the idea of soul-making may be used to argue that this life has little importance as may cyclical views of human existence, and ideas concerning objective immortality may be used either to support or challenge the statement by evaluating the impact that any one life may have on the future.

**[30 marks]      AO2**

## Section B Perceptions of Ultimate Reality

### Indicative content

**Note: This content is indicative rather than prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to all the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels of response.**

### Question 3

0	5	<b>Examine the impact that beliefs about the human situation in relation to God/ Ultimate Reality may have on:</b>
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- **the way people live their lives**
- **people's attitude to life.**

Answers may refer to a range of beliefs concerning the human situation, but the focus of the answer should be on the impact of those beliefs. Answers may include for example:

**Ways in which people live:** a sense of vocation, or understanding of the purpose of life, may lead to a specifically religious lifestyle or individual acts of selflessness / self-sacrifice; the belief that God is the law-maker and humanity his servant may lead to obedience to a set of moral / social laws established by God and some may show how this belief could be manipulated by the religious establishment for its own ends, and a belief in the oneness of life could be reflected in vegetarianism and a concern for all living things.

**Attitudes:** a belief in predestination or karma may lead to fatalism, passive acceptance of whatever happens, a sense of self-worth (among the rich and successful) or of lack of worth (among the poor and suffering); a belief that God is the all loving father of human beings can lead to a positive attitude to suffering and hope for the future.

Examination of the impact of these beliefs is likely to focus on the relationship between the belief and the actions / attitudes. In particular answers may explore how the same belief can affect different people in different ways. There may also be specific examples of those whose lives have been impacted by these beliefs.

Maximum Level 5 if both the way people live their lives and attitude to life are **not** dealt with.

**[45 marks]**

**AO1**

0	6	<b>‘The nature of God/Ultimate Reality means that a personal relationship with God /Ultimate Reality is impossible.’</b>
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**Discuss how far you agree.**

It may be argued that God is transcendent and as such is beyond human experience or that God is immanent so may enter into a personal relationship with creation. Deism and Theism may be contrasted. The idea of the Trinity and incarnation may be used to challenge the claim. In Hinduism there may be consideration of the personal / impersonal aspects of Brahman and in Buddhism consideration of the relationship between the individual and ‘emptiness’. Answers may consider the meaning of ‘personal’ and the extent to which God / Ultimate Reality may be considered ‘personal’, and there may be reference to non-religious views about the nature of God.

**[30 marks]      AO2**

#### Question 4

0	7	<b>Examine how ideas about God/Ultimate Reality are expressed both in art and in symbols.</b>
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**Art:** This may be art in any form, but may be limited to the visual arts. There may be detailed knowledge of particular works of art, such as Blake’s Ancient of Days or Michelangelo’s creator God in the Sistine Chapel. Many such works anthropomorphise God. More abstract works deal with such concepts as emptiness. Hinduism has its own artistic conventions for depicting Brahman, but also uses the Om symbol. Where images of Christ are referred to, it should be made clear how such images are expression of ideas about God.

**Symbols:** These may be symbols used in either language or art, or both. Answers may refer to understanding of symbolism from Tillich and Jung and use a wide range of examples from scripture and sacred writings, for example the parable of the Light in Qur’an 24:35. Visual symbols may include the Aum, other calligraphic symbols, light, emptiness, and figures such as shepherds.

Examination of the ways in which ideas about God / Ultimate reality are expressed is likely to centre on the relationship between the image / symbol and the idea it expresses.

Both art and symbols must be referred to for marks above Level 5, but this could be achieved by writing about symbolic art.

**[45 marks]      AO1**

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0	8
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**‘Only personal religious experience can bring any real understanding of God / Ultimate Reality.’**

**Discuss how far you agree.**

This can be interpreted in many ways. Students may consider how far the examples of images and symbols used in answer to the first part of the question communicate any real understanding to those who do not know of God through personal religious experience. An analysis of how symbols gain meaning, for example, may suggest that they open up a spiritual experience without which they remain signs. Alternatively they may suggest that personal religious experience is so subjective that there is no way of knowing if the understanding of God / Ultimate Reality coming from it is ‘real’ where real is taken as ‘true’. Religious experience may only reflect brain states, not an external reality.

**[30 marks]**

**AO2**



## Section C Religious Experience

### Indicative content

**Note: This content is indicative rather than prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to all the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels of response.**

### Question 5

0	9	<b>Examine scholarly understandings of the types and styles of religious experience.</b>
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Answers may draw on a wide range of material. For example they may give a detailed analysis of either Swinburne's, or Caroline Franks Davies', account of the types of religious experience and / or draw on such scholars as James, Stace, and Katz, and the different types of experience given in the specification: conversion, visions, revelation and mystical experience. They may draw on psychological understandings of such experiences and the insights of neuroscience, but this is not required.

Examination of these understandings of religious experience might consider the reasons for different understandings of these religious experiences and draw on specific examples which have been interpreted differently by different scholars.

All aspects of the question must be tackled for marks above level 5 –that is more than one understanding or scholar, and more than one 'type and style'. Note that some may use the term 'mystical experience' to mean religious experience in general and include different 'types and styles' under that heading.

**[45 marks] AO1**

1	0	<b>'The nature of God/Ultimate Reality means that God/Ultimate Reality cannot be experienced.'</b>
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**Discuss how far you agree.**

Answers may refer to one or more religions. The view that God / Ultimate Reality is wholly transcendent would support this, but it may be challenged both by the concept of the immanence of God / Ultimate Reality and by the idea of incarnation in Christianity. The greatness of God may challenge any claim that the human mind can conceive of / experience God. The belief that God / Ultimate Reality is both immanent and transcendent allows the answer that experience of the same is both possible and not possible at the same time. The doctrine of the Trikaya in Buddhism, which explores the paradox of Buddha as both one with the absolute and appearing in human form, and the personal and impersonal aspects of Brahman in Hinduism allow the argument that God / Ultimate Reality both can and cannot be experienced.

**[30 marks] AO2**

**Question 6**

1	1
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**Examine the value of religious experience in one or more religion(s)as:**

- **historical events**
- **ongoing present day experiences.**

**Historical events:** These might include the revelation of the Qur'an to Muhammad, Paul's conversion, Moses and the burning bush for example, but an account of the experience is not necessary. Answers may consider the value of the experience as a source of religious truth, as an inspiration for the individual and for others, and the relevance / value of the experience both at the time and for later generations.

**Ongoing present day experiences:** These may include, for example, meditation and meditational prayer, experiences of present day prophets, experience of pilgrimage as a spiritual journey. An account of the experiences is not required, answers should draw on evidence of the value attributed to them, and good use could be made here of the work of the RERC.

Examination of the value of such experiences may consider why such experiences are valued differently by different people within a religion and where relevant why attitudes to them have changed over time.

Maximum Level 5 if both aspects are not dealt with.

**[45 marks]**

**AO1**

1	2
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**'Reports of religious experience are simply not believable in the 21st century.'**

**Discuss how far you agree.**

There may be a wide range of responses to this question. Answers may focus on the challenges to religious experience from neuroscience and psychology and consider a range of alternative explanations. Some may challenge the existence of God, or any spiritual dimension to life, on empirical grounds and some may consider the possibility of deceit or error. Answers may evaluate these attempts to discredit religious experiences, defences of religious experience from within religion may also be considered and there may be reference to Alston's view that religious experience is a form of perception.

**[30 marks]**

**AO2**