AQA

A-LEVEL

Religious Studies

RST4C Religious Authority OR Ways of Moral Decision-Making OR Ways of Reading and Understanding Scripture
Mark scheme

2060
June 2016

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.

Further copies of this mark scheme are available from aqa.org.uk

Examination Levels of Response

Religious Studies (Advanced) A2 Level Descriptors

Level	A2 Descriptor AO1	Marks *Unit 4* *italics*	A2 Descriptor AO2	Marks *Unit 4* *italics*	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**	

RST4C: Religious Authority or Ways of Moral Decision-Making or Ways of Reading and Understanding Scripture

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 **Examine both the role of God and the religious conscience as sources of religious authority.**

As a source of religious authority, God would be seen as the ultimate authority, since God possesses the ultimate attributes of being all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving, etc.

Moreover God's revelation through scripture and through religious experience is generally held to confer authority in other areas of life. For example scripture is held to be in some sense the word of God, and religious experience has a complete authority for the recipient since the power of God makes the experience compelling.

God's authority is used to underpin that of scripture, for example in scriptural claims that scripture is inerrant and must be obeyed.

God's authority is also used to grant further authority to religious institutions, religious leaders, and the religious conscience, for example, since these derive their authority ultimately from God.

The religious conscience is seen as a major faculty of moral decision-making, and the nature and use of its authority depend on its definition.

In the Christian tradition, for example, Augustine interprets it as the (innate) voice of God; hence the conscience should be obeyed.

For Aquinas, what is God-given and innate is the faculty of reason, which allows individuals both to inform their consciences according to scriptural teaching and Church rules and to make a reasoned judgement when deciding what to do in a particular situation.

In Buddhism, the conscience relates particularly to a well-directed mind, and is used in developing virtues of compassion and generosity, and of unselfish love for all living beings.

Maximum Level 5 / 35 marks if only one part addressed.

[45 marks]   AO1

0 2 **'For believers, God has more authority than the religious conscience.'**

Assess this claim.

In one sense this might be an obvious truth, since most religions rely on the existence of God as a source of revelation and ultimate authority, without which there would be no religion in the first place.

It is through God's authority that religious institutions, religious leaders and religious laws are authenticated and set. Students might illustrate this through references to scriptural passages.

In Islam, Muslims believe that God has complete authority over human destiny and life after death, and the name of the religion signifies complete submission to the will of Allah as revealed to Muhammad in the Qur'an.

For Sikhs, God is the 'one constant' on which believers must meditate in order to establish some communication with and enlightenment concerning God.

For Buddhists, the statement is clearly incorrect, since the Buddha rejected the existence of a creator deity, emphasising instead a study of the causal relationships underlying reality, to develop those virtues and states of mind which alleviate the stress of samsara.

Insofar as religious believers in general may interpret scripture as symbolic or allegorical rather than absolute and literal, the authority of the religious conscience may be absolute, since it alone can give consent to what tradition teaches, what religious institutions command, and what scripture claims about God.

[30 marks] **AO2**

Question 2

| 0 | 3 | **Examine secular challenges to religious authority.**

The Specification refers to secular challenges from philosophy and from science, so all or most of the students' responses will refer to these categories. Accept any relevant material.

The question requires students to consider the challenges to religious **authority** as opposed, for example, simply to religious belief.

Secular scientific challenges are likely to include material about the origins of the universe and the origins of life. For the former, where religious authorities might refer to texts about God's creation of the world / universe which can be challenged for their simplicity or inaccuracy, the challenge from science will be descriptions of Big Bang theory or of multiverse theory in which there is little or no room for God.

For the origins of life, challenges will come from the sciences associated with evolutionary theory, particularly a rejection of any notion of the guidance of evolution by God.

Philosophical challenges might concern morality, for example, where secular moralists assert that morality has nothing to do with God, which undermines the authority of scriptural claims to the contrary.

Students are likely to refer in particular to challenges to Divine Command Theory, where criticisms of DCT undermine the moral authority of God.

Challenges to the political authority of religion might be directed at the authority of states where political authority has a religious basis.

Challenges to the authority of religious leaders might come from a rejection of the scriptural basis for such authority.

For challenges to the authority of religious language, some might use the critique from Hume and the logical positivists; others might use atheism and post-modernism (for example) to challenge any meta-narrative of religious authority based in realism.

Some might argue that if it can be shown that God does not exist, then there can be no religious authority at all.

[45 marks]   **AO1**

| 0 | 4 | **'Religion has no convincing answer to secular challenges to religious authority.'**

How far do you agree?

Responses to this will relate to the specific challenges given by individual students, so will be broad-ranging.

For scientific challenges, for example, acceptance of the claim might be made on the basis of the antiquity of religious answers contrasted with the success of modern science.

For philosophical challenges to religious morality, acceptance might be grounded in the denial of God's existence, or in the claim that secular morality is superior because it is grounded in a rational choice where religious morality is more often grounded in slavish obedience to God's commands.

For other viewpoints, religious responses to challenges to the authority of religious language might be grounded in the inadequacies of logical positivism and post-modernism, for example in the latter's failure to get round the counter-challenge that its own critique can be nothing more than an empty narrative.

Some might argue that religion does not need to respond to some challenges, since religion and science (for example) are completely different, or are competing hypotheses about reality.

Whatever responses are made to the statement, for the higher Levels some attention needs to be paid to the word 'convincing'.

Some might argue that religious experience gives personal assurance to believers, and so can give answers to all secular objections.

[30 marks]   AO2

Question 3

0 5 **Examine how laws from scripture and from religious tradition are used in moral decision-making.**

In Judaism, for example, scriptural laws would encompass the 613 mitzvot contained in the Torah. These include positive commandments to perform an act and negative ones to abstain from an act. Some (the mishpatim) are held to be self-evident, such as the prohibitions against theft and murder. The edot (testimonies) reflect important historical events such as Shabbat, and the command to keep it holy. The chukim laws are held to reflect God's will.

The Talmud is the oral Torah which explains how to keep the scriptures and how to apply the laws; written down in the Mishnah, elaborated further by the additional commentaries known as the Gemara.

For religious tradition, students might look at the use of the Roman Catholic Natural Law tradition or Situation Ethics in the Protestant tradition.

In Judaism in particular it is very difficult to make a legal demarcation between laws derived from scripture and those based in tradition, so students do not have to be definitive about this.

In Christianity, laws from scripture are used for example in Roman Catholic ethical teaching and in Protestant Divine Command theory. For the former, scriptural laws underpin Natural Law Ethics, and for the latter, laws from scripture are taken literally.

The focus should be on the use of religious laws, which could include reference to medical research and developments / business practice and economics, although there is no requirement to do so.

Maximum Level 5 / 35 marks if only scripture or religious tradition addressed.

[45 marks]   **AO1**

0 6 **'To make morally good decisions, people should always follow religious laws.'**

Assess this claim.

In the Halakha, this is to an extent self-evident, since it contains an enormous body of material by which life is regulated, and a literal translation of Halakha would be something like, 'the way of walking'. Nevertheless, the power of Halakha to regulate life varies in relation to the geographical and historical diversity of Jewish communities within the Diaspora.

In the Conservative view of Halakha, its morality / application is informed by the unfolding narrative of Jewish tradition. When a law is held to conflict with morality (eg where it recommends excessive punishments, such as the death penalty for the 'rebellious child'), then the law is held to be non-applicable.

In Islam, following religious laws is the basis of Shari'a, which derives from the authority of the Qur'an and the example of Mohammad in the sunnah. To ensure that morally good decisions are made, Muslims also make use of secondary sources such as ijmah (consensus), qiyas (deductive analogy) and ijtihad (independent reasoning), so following religious laws and making morally good decisions are synonymous concepts. Morality in Islam is not relative, so the authority of religious laws sets a universal standard.

Students might argue that by always following some set of religious laws in one religion or another people will make morally good decisions within their own tradition.
Some might argue that deontological systems remove freedom of choice, and without freedom no truly moral decision can be made.

Others will argue that people are more likely to make good decisions using alternative systems such as Utilitarianism and Virtue Ethics, where the focus is secular and philosophical, and where a morally good decision is defined in terms of reason and free choice.

[30 marks] **AO2**

Question 4

| 0 | 7 | **Examine how the following are used to make moral decisions.**

- **One teleological ethical system.**
- **One hybrid ethical system.**

Illustrate your answer with reference to either medical research and medical developments or business practice and economics.

For teleological theories, students might, for example, choose Utilitarianism or Situation Ethics (if they regard SE as teleological theory). The question makes no exclusions, so it would be legitimate for students to choose any other teleological theory, such as: existentialism; or eudaemonist theories (including Virtue Ethics if so described).

Within a particular theory a sub-set of the theory would qualify as 'one' theory: eg Bentham-type Utilitarianism, JS Mill-type Utilitarianism, Singer, et al, but equally it would be legitimate to refer to different branches of Utilitarianism as part of the one overall theory of Utilitarianism.

For hybrid theories, the most likely will be JS Mill's version of Utilitarianism where it is seen as a version of Rule Utilitarianism; Situation Ethics, where this is seen as a hybrid based on the rule of agape interpreted situationally; and Virtue Ethics, where (for example) the rule is seen as the doctrine of the mean interpreted in terms of the excess or deficiency of the virtue.

Others might use Proportionalism, or any other theory where students identify a legitimate deontological and teleological focus.

The question requires students to examine the 'use' of each theory with regard to medical research and developments or to business practice and economics, so the teleological and hybrid focus in each case should be illustrated through such use.

Maximum Level 5 / 35 marks if only one aspect addressed.

[45 marks]   AO1

| 0 | 8 | **'It does not matter which ethical system people use.'**

How far do you agree?

Agreement with this statement might be based on the view that ethics is relative, so all ethical systems are culturally related and are nothing more than the expression of an opinion.

Some cultures use capital punishment, for example, whereas others reject it as unethical; moreover there are disagreements within cultures about such issues.

Sexual ethics provides likely examples, since sexual practices are arguably issues for personal or cultural choice.

Some might argue that it does not matter which ethical system people use, because there is no life after death to encourage morally 'good' behaviour.

There is an obvious divide between secular and religious ethics in so far as the latter is predicated upon the existence of a moral creator or (in the case of Buddhism) upon the existence of causal inter-relationships developed within samsara.

For those who believe in life after death, obedience to God's moral commands might be seen as necessary in order to gain the reward of heaven as opposed to the punishment of hell.

Some religious believers will adopt a non-religious morality in the belief that true morality can operate only within a system of free choice, and such a system is not developed by acceptance of God's absolute commands.

The ramifications of the question are very broad, so students might, for example, develop arguments for competing teleological, deontological, hybrid, secular and religious ethical systems.

[30 marks]   AO2

Question 5

| 0 | 9 | **Examine the role of scholars in understanding the scriptures of one religion.**

By 'scholars', students can understand either the work of individual (named) scholars, or a general school of thought. Moreover the scholars or schools of thought can be contemporary or from any earlier time period. For the latter, for example, the Hindu Mīmāṃsā school affirmed that the Vedas are eternal (nitya) and impersonal (apauruseya), recording these principles in the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā Sūtras (circa 200 BC).

Some will look at specific attempts to apply scripture to a specific (contemporary) situation, for example embryo research.

For Islam, students might refer for example to Ijtihad, which is a specific legal term for the process by which scholars will use Qur'an and Hadith and apply analogical reasoning in order to solve a legal problem.

For Christianity, students might refer to the scholastic processes of text, literary, form and redaction criticism, as tools by which scholars seek to understand the origins of texts and speech forms in order to clarify their meaning.

Students might refer specifically to the act of translation of scripture from its original language so that it can be understood by a wider audience, eg from Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic, Greek, Sanskrit, Pali, etc.

[45 marks]   AO1

| 1 | 0 | **'Scripture always needs to be interpreted.'**

Assess this claim.

Students might agree with this for a number of reasons.

In particular, where there is no agreed 'base text' for the scriptures of a religion, then the reconstruction of a supposed original text might be seen as necessary for understanding. There are no original versions of any of the Hebrew scriptures, so reconstruction of the text makes use of translated scriptures, eg the Septuagint and the Syriac, and any reconstruction must involve interpretation. With the Hebrew Masoretic text, which is the authoritative text of Tanakh for Rabbinic Judaism, the fact is that the pointing of the Hebrew is in itself an interpretation of the Paleo Hebrew text written without vowel signs.

Students might argue that the same is true for the religious and moral truths in the Bible, where the meaning is a matter for interpretation.
Alternatively, some might point out that the key word in the statement is 'always', and argue (using examples) that there are many points in the scriptures where the meaning is perfectly clear without the need for interpretation, and the idea of personal scriptural study takes this line to some extent. Some might argue that interpretation is both inevitable and desirable, since scripture can have different meanings for different people in different situations, etc.

[30 marks]   AO2

Question 6

| 1 | 1 |

Explain what the scriptures of one religion teach about the nature of God / Ultimate Reality and about the relationship between God / Ultimate Reality and humankind.

The Christian scriptures teach, for example, that God: is love (1 John 4:8); is light (1 John 1:5); does not change (Heb. 13:8); can show anger (Psalm 30:5); is the divine warrior who marches to the aid of his people and destroys their enemies (Exod.15:1-7); is the creator (Gen. 1ff., Isa. 40:28); is a shield for those who take refuge in him (Psalm 18:30); is spirit (John 4:24); is the redeemer (Psalm 31:5); is all-knowing (Heb. 4). God is seen as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, so for example in Gen. 1:26, 'Let *us* make man ...' is seen by some as a reference to the Christian Trinity. In particular, God is seen throughout the Bible as a holy and moral God (Lev. 20:26), as the source of ethical monotheism and the giver of laws such as the Decalogue; so in eschatology, God is the judge before whom all humans will eventually stand (Revel. 20). Credit different doctrinal and denominational explanations.

In Islam, God's oneness is similarly focal as in Surah 112, and the 'beautiful names' of Allah serve as a focus for Muslims to think about his unknowable nature.

In Christianity and Judaism, the relationship between God and humankind is described in many ways, eg that humankind is ontologically dependent on God; God is 'sovereign'; humans are created in God's image (meaning something like: they possess an element of divine morality and reason); the relationship between God and humans is marred by the 'fall' from perfection; God establishes religious and moral principles for humans to follow; humans are God's stewards, charged with the responsibility of caring for God's creation; humans are free to accept or reject God; humans will have to deal with the consequences of rejecting God.

In Sikhism, Sikh life is focused on the relationship with God and living that relationship within the Sikh community; becoming close to God is to focus attention on God rather than the self: mukti – liberation through the grace of God rather than through personal achievement, etc.

Maximum Level 5 / 35 marks if only one aspect addressed.

NB: It would be appropriate for students to treat both aspects of the question together if they so wish.

[45 marks]   AO1

| 1 | 2 | **'There cannot be any relationship between God / Ultimate Reality and humankind.'**

How far do you agree?

This might be claimed by deists, for example, who hold that observation of the world is sufficient to determine the existence of a creator of the universe. Reason and inductive observation are the only source of such knowledge, and leave no room for reliance on unscientific religious dogma.

Humans know what they know through investigating the laws of nature, so the idea that God reveals himself through supernatural revelations such as miracles or through a personal (non-verifiable) response to prayer is closer to superstition than knowledge.

Scripture which contains accounts of such revelations is therefore to be rejected. Instead of reliance on God, humans should rely on their faculties of reasoning and self-determination. A deist might therefore support the logic of the cosmological and design arguments for the existence of God, but the concept of a relationship between God and humankind is absent.

The claim would also be accepted by atheists (and Buddhists) on the grounds that there is no God to have a relationship with.

It might also be accepted by those who hold that God is utterly transcendent and metaphysical, on the grounds that humans, who are essentially bound by matter and space-time, cannot 'know' any such being.

Those who reject the claim would include theists, who might argue that an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God has the ability as well as the desire to have a relationship with humans, being both transcendent and immanent as well as perfectly loving.

For most religions, the point of creation is for God to have a relationship with what he has created, so the issue is not whether or not there can be such a relationship but how it is to be understood.

[30 marks]   AO2