



**General Certificate of Education  
June 2013**

**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 candidates' 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 candidates' 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 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</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 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</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. 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</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>	
<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>	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>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

0	1	<b>Examine religious and secular perspectives on the nature of human life.</b>
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Nature of human life may be taken as solely concerning what a human being is, or as concerning the human situation, or both. There is clear overlap between these two aspects.

Candidates may refer to more than one religion, but better answers will make it clear to which religion they are referring.

Candidates may consider a range of ideas.

**Religious perspectives** (e.g.) ever-changing combination of mental and physical energies (Buddhism); some combination of body and soul – good answers will avoid generalisations here; created by God; made in God's image; expression of karma and karma generating; unsatisfactory (e.g. Buddhist concept of Dukkha) fallen /sinful; free / determined / conditioned /predestined; linear and cyclical views; mortal / an immortal soul/ subject to rebirth / reincarnation; test/ soul-making process.

**Secular perspectives** (e.g.) animal, mortal, combination of id, ego and superego; thrown into existence to make his/her own sense out of it; life pointless / absurd; life all there is; opportunity for self fulfilment and development; opportunity to make your mark on existence and leave legacy for future generations.

Answers dealing with only one of religious and secular, Max Level 5

**(45 marks)**

**AO1**

0	2	<b>'Religious perspectives on human life are far more positive than secular perspectives.' Discuss how far you agree.</b>
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There may be discussion about the sense in which a perspective may be positive or negative e.g. optimistic / life affirming / contributes to the happiness of those who share it. It can be argued that the variety of both religious and secular views make this a too-broad generalisation. E.g. much religious teaching places an absolute value on life from the moment of conception or birth and gives humanity the prospect of a wonderful future 'in heaven'. In contrast some of the existentialist writers see life as meaningless struggle. However, other religious ideas about this life appear to be life denying – with much of life either lacking value or being actually corrupting and evil while secular ideas can seem to be a celebration of this life.

**(30 marks)**

**AO2**

## Question 2

0	3
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**Examine religious and non-religious ideas about, and attitudes to, death.**

### Ideas:

**Religious** ideas (e.g.) a stage in life through which all must pass; the point at which the opportunity to earn a place in heaven or hell is over; an experience to be lived through (e.g. some Buddhist and Muslim traditions); escape from the prison or shell of the physical body; beginning of a waiting period until final judgement; temporary separation from loved ones.

**Non-religious:** (e.g.) the end; decay of the biological organism; there are non-religious spiritualist views that see death as the transition to a new phase of life.

### Attitudes

Many attitudes are shared, but for different reasons. Candidates should identify examples of both (e.g.)

Death may be welcomed by both e.g. as new beginning for believers and a release for secularists, and by both religious and political martyrs.

Both believers and secularists may fight to sustain life and avoid death as long as possible.

Death may be considered something to be accepted as a fact of life, which makes life itself more precious, and both may see the need to live mindful of death – i.e. knowing that no one knows how long they may live.

Fear of dying may apply to secular views where fear of death (and after) is more associated with religion.

Both secular and religious attitudes to death may be reflected in funeral arrangements and other traditions surrounding death.

Answers awarded more than level 5 must cover all aspects of the question – religious and non-religious, ideas and attitudes, but no balance between the elements is required.

**(45 marks) AO1**

0	4
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**'A belief in life after death is both unreasonable and irrelevant.'**  
**Discuss how far you agree.**

**Unreasonable:** Candidates may respond by arguing that belief in life after death is based on evidence or at least consistent with 'reason' and not contradicted by evidence. They might consider the meaning of 'unreasonable belief' and consider whether any belief based on personal experience, as a belief in life after death may be, can ever be dismissed as unreasonable. They might also consider whether such a belief can be dismissed as wishful thinking for which all supposed evidence can be explained away.

**Irrelevant:** Candidates may consider who the belief may be relevant for, and refer to examples – e.g. those who live, or die, in hope of reward after death, and those who concern themselves only with this world, with no interest in a possible next. There are many ways in which the secular world has a vested interest in life after death from mediums to the film industry and it does not require a personal belief in life after death to profit from the beliefs of others. The belief may be considered relevant but false.

**(30 marks) AO2**

## Section B Perceptions of Ultimate Reality

### Question 3

<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Examine differing understandings of the relationship between God/Ultimate Reality and:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the physical world</li> <li>• the human situation.</li> </ul>
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#### Physical world (e.g.)

- God as transcendent or immanent or both
- Interventionist God, Deist God
- The physical world as caused by God and as presently dependent on God
- The physical world as an expression of God's nature
- The physical world as a constant flux/illusion – expression of Brahman or of Adi or Dharmakaya Buddha

#### Human situation: (e.g.)

- Created by God in the beginning
- Each individual created by God
- Presently dependent on God
- Free / determined/ predestined
- Conditioned existence

Candidates may also refer to explicitly secular understandings of the relationship between physical world / human situation and (the concept of) God, e.g. Marx on the relationship between 'God' and the human situation, but this is not required.

There is a natural overlap between the two areas – physical world and human situation, but for answers dealing with one only, Max level 5.

**(45 marks) AO1**

<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>'A study of the physical world cannot give an adequate understanding of God/Ultimate Reality.' Discuss how far you agree.</b>
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Candidates may consider how far God or Ultimate Reality can be understood without direct experience of them; natural theology offers insights into the existence and nature of God based on a study of nature (e.g. design argument, cosmological argument and miracles) – but how much understanding can be accessed through such means and how can its truth be assessed? not least because differing religions use the same or similar arguments to reach different conclusions. They may also consider what might be considered an 'adequate' understanding of God or Ultimate Reality and how people might know that they had achieved this.

**(30 marks) AO2**

**Question 4**

<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>
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**Examine ways in which religious language expresses ideas about God/Ultimate Reality.**

Candidates may consider a range of examples and theories of religious language including: language games; via negativa; analogy; symbolism and non-cognitive uses of language. These must be carefully applied to 'expressing the nature of God / Ultimate Reality' to be relevant.

**(45 marks) AO1**

<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>
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**Understanding God/Ultimate Reality depends on religious experience, not on words.' Discuss how far you agree.**

Candidates may take their cue from Anselm's claim that those who doubt God's existence know only the word 'God' and not God himself. What can be taught is how to use the words correctly. Analogy and symbolism suggest that words get their meaning through some understanding of God which is prior to the words themselves. Via negativa, however, stands alone, although this use of words could be said to evoke a sense of God rather than bring understanding of him. They may also discuss whether any understanding of God/Ultimate reality is possible or whether it can be accessed through religious experience.

**(30 marks) AO2**

## Section C Religious Experience

### Question 5

0	9	<p><b>Examine how the following types of religious experience may be identified:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• visions</li> <li>• mystical experiences.</li> </ul>
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Candidates may refer to any of the proposed definitions of these two types of religious experience and/or the processes involved in them.

Visions: (e.g.) corporeal, imaginative and intellectual; private and public.

Mystical experiences: (e.g.) James and the four characteristics of mystical experience; Stace: extrovertive and introvertive mystical experiences – those which raise awareness of the otherness of God/Ultimate Reality and those in which the mystic achieves ‘union’ with the divine.

They may consider how the experiencers recognize their own experience and/or how others may identify them, and could refer to both ineffability and to the numinous in this context.

Max level 5 for answers not dealing with both forms of religious experience.

**(45 marks)**

**AO1**

1	0	<p><b>‘Religious experience cannot be verified.’ Discuss how far you agree.</b></p>
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Candidates may refer to the subjective nature of many such experiences and consider the strengths and weaknesses of Swinburne’s principles of credulity and testimony. They may also consider the way religions assess such experiences and the strengths and weaknesses of such methods, as well the natural explanations that have been proposed for such experiences.

**(30 marks)**

**AO2**

### Question 6

1	1
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**Examine the role of religious experience in:**

- the foundation of one or more religion(s)
- the lives of believers today.

**Foundation:** Answers should relate clearly to the foundation of the chosen religions – not to later developments. For example, candidates may be aware of the account scripture gives not only of the experience itself but of its consequences – e.g. the covenant with Abraham and Moses, the conversion of St Paul, the revelation of the Qur’an to Muhammad, the enlightenment of the Buddha.

**Lives of believers today:**

Charismatic worship; prayer; conversion; guidance; meditation. There may be some appreciation of whether this is central or incidental to the religion as a whole and of the status accorded to such experiences. This may be personal religious experiences and /or experiences of others.

For answers dealing with only one of foundation and life of believers today – Max level 5.

**(45 marks) AO1**

1	2
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**‘People cannot know that they have experienced God / Ultimate Reality.’**

**Discuss how far you agree.**

Candidates may consider whether prior knowledge of God /Ultimate Reality is necessary to identify what has been experienced, whether such knowledge is possible and whether without it recognition of God /Ultimate Reality is impossible. The idea of self – authenticating experiences may be considered along with a range of definitions of God /Ultimate reality and a range of experiences which are seen as divine disclosure or apprehension of Ultimate Reality.

**(30 marks) AO2**