

Pearson Edexcel GCE A level Religious Studies



**Guidance on the
requirements across
different AO2 questions**

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GCE A level Religious Studies

Assessment Objectives

Assessment Objective	Students Must
AO1	<p>Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teachinginfluence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societiescause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practiceapproaches to the study of religion and belief.
AO2	<p>Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.</p>

Across the A level qualification, (as with GCSE) there are two assessment objectives.

- **Assessment objective one (AO1)** assesses the candidates' knowledge and understanding in relation to the content within that paper.
- **Assessment objective two (AO2)** assesses candidates' ability to analyse and evaluate the content they have studied.

At A-Level **AO1** carries **40%** of the marks with **AO2** covering the remaining **60%**.

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Paper Structure

Our A level exam papers all follow the same structure so students can familiarise themselves with the question types and how to answer each.

<p>1 Explore ideas about analogy in the design argument for the existence of God.</p> <p>(8)</p>	
<p>2 Assess the debate between Copleston and Russell on religious experience as an argument for the existence of God.</p> <p>(12)</p>	
<p>Answer ALL questions. Write your answers in the spaces provided. Read the following passage before answering the questions.</p> <p>A fine brass hypothesis may be killed by inches, the death by a thousand qualifications. It seems to people who are not religious as if there was no conceivable event the occurrence of which would be admitted by religious people to be a reason for conceding 'There wasn't a God after all.' Someone tells us that God loves us as a father loves his children. But then we see a child dying of inoperable cancer of the throat. His earthly father is driven frantic in his efforts to help, but his heavenly Father reveals no signs of concern. Some qualification is made - God's love is 'not merely human love'. But then we ask: Just what would have to happen to entitle us to say 'God does not exist'?</p> <p>A believer's statement has been so eroded that it is no longer an assertion at all.</p> <p>(Quote from <i>The Philosophy of Religion</i>, Flew A, Editor: Mitchell B, by permission of Oxford University Press)</p>	
<p>3(a) Clarify the ideas illustrated in this passage about falsification in religious language.</p> <p><i>You must refer to the passage in your response.</i></p> <p>(10)</p>	
<p>(b) Analyse the implications for religious language from this passage.</p> <p>(20)</p>	
<p>4 Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the belief in immortality of the soul and reincarnation.</p> <p>In your response to this question, you must include how developments in Philosophy of Religion have been influenced by one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Religion and Ethics• New Testament Studies• the study of a religion. <p>(30)</p>	

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AO2 Questions and command words

Assess	Requires reasoned argument of factors to reach a judgement regarding their importance/relevance to the question context.
Analyse	Deconstruct information and/or issues to find connections and provide logical chains of reasoning in order to make judgements regarding their importance/relevance to the question context.
Evaluate	Review/analyse information, bringing it together to form a conclusion/judgement based on strengths/weaknesses, alternatives, relevant data or information. Come to a supported judgement of a subject's qualities and relation to its context.

At A level Religious Studies, we have three different question types that assess AO2 skills:

- **12-mark 'Assess' questions:** These questions require students to discuss different arguments to reach a judgement. We recommend that students spend around 20 minutes on this question at A level.
- **20-mark 'Analyse' questions:** These questions require students to deconstruct information, find connections, appraise different arguments before coming to a judgement. We recommend that students spend around 30 minutes on this question at A level.
- **30-mark 'Evaluate' questions:** These questions require students to take a more holistic approach to their whole A level across all papers, reviewing what they have learned and synthesising it, appraising a range of perspectives/approaches to the question before coming to a judgement. We recommend that students spend around 40 minutes on this question at A level.

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Differences in AO2 requirements

These three question types all assess AO1 and AO2, but as each question varies (in terms of the number of marks available and recommended time allowance) we would expect a greater level of depth for those questions worth more marks.

Additionally, the level criteria for each question varies, with additional requirements needed for the questions worth more marks.

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Differences: 12-mark 'Assess' and 20-mark 'Analyse' questions

12-mark 'Assess' Q (top level criteria)	20-mark 'Analyse' Q (top level criteria)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A wide range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are carefully selected and used appropriately, accurately and sustained throughout (AO1).• Critically deconstructs religious information/issues leading to coherent and logical chains of reasoning (AO2).• Constructs coherent and reasoned judgements of the full range of elements in the question (AO2). <p>Candidates who show achievement only against AO1 will not be able to gain marks beyond the top of Level 1.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A wide range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are carefully selected and used appropriately, accurately and sustained throughout (AO1).• Critically deconstructs religious information/issues leading to coherent and logical chains of reasoning (AO2).• Makes connections between the full range of elements in the question (AO2).• Constructs coherent and reasoned judgements of the full range of elements in the question, which are fully supported by the comprehensive appraisal of evidence (AO2). <p>Candidates who show achievement only against AO1 will not be able to gain marks beyond the top of Level 1.</p>

*Differences highlighted in yellow

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Differences: 12-mark 'Assess' and 20-mark 'Analyse' questions

The difference between a 12-mark 'Assess' question and a 20-mark 'Analyse' question is the ability to **connect different elements** of the question.

A 20-mark 'Analyse' question will have a **wider focus** (the questions will be written to allow for this which will allow **more scope** for this within the answer).

Additionally, **'appraisal' of the evidence** is required in a 20-mark 'Analyse' question so the answer will need a **'weighing-up'** of the arguments and discussion of the **strengths or limitations of the arguments/evidence**.

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Differences: 12-mark 'Assess' and 20-mark 'Analyse' questions

Examples taken from Paper 2 Ethics paper

12-mark 'Assess' question

Assess the ethical challenges raised by pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD). [12]

(Taken from the 2019 paper)

20-mark 'Analyse' question

Analyse the issues raised for medical ethics by the concepts of the sanctity and value of life [20]

(Taken from the 2018 paper)

As you can see, the 12 mark 'Assess' question has a much **narrower focus**, identifying PGD specifically.

The 20-mark 'Analyse' question has a much **broader focus** as students can refer to several issues related to medical ethics, allowing them to bring in a **broader range of arguments** and therefore needing them to **'make connections between the full range of elements of the question'**.

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Differences: 20-mark 'Analyse' and 30-mark 'Evaluate' questions

20-mark 'Analyse Q (top level criteria)	30-mark 'Evaluate Q (top level criteria)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A wide range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are carefully selected and used appropriately, accurately and sustained throughout (AO1).• Critically deconstructs religious information/issues leading to coherent and logical chains of reasoning (AO2).• Makes connections between the full range of elements in the question (AO2).• Constructs coherent and reasoned judgements of the full range of elements in the question, which are fully supported by the comprehensive appraisal of evidence (AO2). <p>Candidates who show achievement only against AO1 will not be able to gain marks beyond the top of Level 1.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A wide range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are carefully selected and used appropriately, accurately and sustained throughout (AO1).• Critically deconstructs religious information/issues leading to coherent and logical chains of reasoning (AO2).• Makes connections between the full range of elements in the question (AO2).• Constructs coherent and reasoned judgements of the full range of elements in the question (AO2).• Reasoned judgements are fully supported by the comprehensive appraisal of evidence (AO2).• Convincing conclusions are provided which fully and logically draw together ideas and are fully justified (AO2). <p>Candidates who show achievement only against AO1 will not be able to gain marks beyond the top of Level 1.</p> <p>Candidates who do not show links with another area of their course of study will not be able to gain marks beyond the top of Level 4.</p>

*Differences highlighted in yellow

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Differences: 20-mark 'Analyse' and 30-mark 'Evaluate' questions

The main difference between a top-level answer for a 20-mark 'Analyse' question and a 30-mark 'Evaluate' question, lies in the ability to provide a **conclusion** which logically draws the answer together.

As there are 30 marks available, candidates are expected to spend around 40 minutes on this question. Answers should include a **greater breadth of material** and this concept of **'drawing the answer together' is required to maintain focus** and show the candidates' understanding of the **big picture** and how discrete elements of the course tie together.

The best answers often have their conclusion woven throughout their answer, focusing back to the **key words of the question** and then tied together at the end. 30-mark 'Analyse' questions are often **broader** to allow for synoptic links (which are required to achieve the top level) so this 'pulling together' of the various elements of different arguments is necessary to form a coherent answer.

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Differences: 20-mark 'Analyse' and 30-mark 'Evaluate' questions

Examples taken from Paper 1 Philosophy of Religion paper

20-mark 'Analyse' question

Analyse the view that no satisfactory solutions can be found to the problem of evil and suffering. [20]

(Taken from the 2020 paper)

30-mark 'Evaluate' question

Evaluate the view that the problem of suffering shows that ideas about the nature and existence of God are inconsistent.

In your response to this question, you must include how developments in Philosophy of Religion have been influenced by one of the following:

- Religion and Ethics
- New Testament Studies
- The study of a religion. [30]

(Taken from the 2019 paper)

As you can see, the 20-mark 'Analyse' question focuses on solutions to the problem of evil, which is **broad** enough to allow students to appraise several theodicies.

However, the 30-mark 'Evaluate' question is **broader** still, giving students the opportunity to evaluate the problem of suffering, appraise theodicies but also discuss implications of suffering for both the nature of God and God's existence altogether.

There is much more that a candidate can discuss as part of the larger 'Evaluate' question. **As the question is broader, it will require more 'bringing together' at the end with a conclusion.**

Further Support for Edexcel Religious Studies



Contact the Religious Studies team:

Email: teachingreligiousstudies@pearson.com

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Contact online: <https://bit.ly/2KLSNT0>

Book a Teams meeting with the subject advisor:
<https://bit.ly/3rEVLx8>

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Stay informed:

Sign up for subject updates: <https://bit.ly/2G6mmfe>

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Access Course Materials:

Visit the Pearson Edexcel Religious Studies website for course materials:

- Specification and sample assessments: [\(GCSE\(A\)/GCSE\(B\)/GCE\)/Int GCSE](#)
- Exam materials: [\(GCSE\(A\)/GCSE\(B\)/GCE\)/Int GCSE](#)
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