



Mark Scheme

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In Religious Studies (8RS0)
Paper 1: Philosophy of Religion

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Question number	Answer	
1	8 marks AO1 AO1 will be used by candidates to demonstrate knowledge, understanding and specialist language and terminology when responding to the question. Candidates who only address one of the principles cannot go beyond L2. Candidates may refer to the following. • The principle of testimony suggests we should believe the testimony of others unless we have good reason to doubt them. • The principle of credulity states we should accept that things probably are as they appear to be. • If we did not follow these principles all sorts of experiences would need to be doubted and we would have to change the way we live. • A testimony claiming to be an experience of God should be believed, in the absence of a reason to distrust the witness. • These principles and testimonies rest on the idea that it is possible that a being, God, exists and can be experienced.	

Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1–2	• A narrow range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected but are unlikely to be used appropriately or accurately (AO1). • Knowledge and understanding addresses a narrow range of key religious ideas and beliefs with some inaccuracies (AO1). • Provides a superficial understanding of key religious ideas and beliefs (AO1).
Level 2	3–5	• A range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected, most of which are used appropriately with some inaccuracies (AO1). • Knowledge and understanding addresses a narrow range of key religious ideas and beliefs (AO1). • Develops key religious ideas and beliefs to show a depth of understanding (AO1).
Level 3	6–8	• A wide range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are carefully selected and used appropriately, accurately and sustained throughout (AO1). • Knowledge and understanding addresses a broad range of key religious ideas and beliefs (AO1). • Comprehensively develops key religious ideas and beliefs to show a depth of understanding (AO1).

Question number	Answer	
2	3 marks AO1, 6 marks AO2 AO1 will be used by candidates to underpin their analysis and evaluation. Candidates will be required to demonstrate knowledge and understanding using specialist language and terminology when responding to the question, and in meeting the AO2 descriptors described below. Candidates may refer to the following in relation to AO1. • There are many types of suffering, including physical and emotional, caused by both natural and moral evil. • Some suffering can be explained by human free will, but this does not account for the suffering caused by natural evil such as flood, drought, famine. • Suffering leads to the logical problem of how an omnipotent, omnibenevolent and omniscient God can exist alongside the reality of evil and suffering. AO2 requires candidates to develop their answers showing analytical and evaluative skills to address the question. Such responses will be underpinned by their use of knowledge and understanding. Candidates may refer to the following in relation to AO2. • The logical problem of evil, stated through the inconsistent triad, claims an omnipotent, omnibenevolent and omniscient God must possess both the power and the will to remove evil and suffering from the world, consequently, the continued existence of evil challenges belief in such a God. • The evidential problem of evil challenges the probability of the existence of God because even if suffering can be seen to be purposeful it is unconvincing for the reason that there is simply too much evil in the world, for example, the suffering endured by innocent children and the extent of natural evil in the world. • The free will defence claims to solve the problem of evil and suffering because free will allows people to choose between good and evil and therefore become morally responsible beings. • Some evil and suffering can be seen as unjustifiable, for example, Rowe's fawn dying in agony in a forest fire because pointless evil and suffering such as this goes against the moral convictions of theists and atheists alike and therefore contests the existence of God. Candidates who show achievement only against AO1 will not be able to gain marks beyond the top of Level 1.	

Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1–3	- A narrow range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected but are unlikely to be used appropriately or accurately (AO1). - Information/issues are identified (AO2). - Judgements are supported by generalised arguments (AO2).
Level 2	4–6	- A range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected, most of which are used appropriately with some inaccuracies (AO1). - Deconstructs religious information/issues, which lead to a simplistic chain of reasoning (AO2). - Judgements of a limited range of elements in the question are made (AO2).
Level 3	7–9	- 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)

Question number	Indicative content
3	3 marks AO1, 6 marks AO2 AO1 will be used by candidates to underpin their analysis and evaluation. Candidates will be required to demonstrate knowledge and understanding using specialist language and terminology when responding to the question, and in meeting AO2 descriptors described below. Candidates may refer to the following in relation to AO1. - The universe has a beginning and so must also have a cause that is external to itself. - God is the best explanation of the cause of the universe. - The universe 'just is' and does not require an explanation. AO2 requires candidates to develop their answers showing analytical and evaluative skills to address the question. Such responses will be underpinned by their use of knowledge and understanding. Candidates may refer to the following in relation to AO2. - Aquinas' first three ways demonstrate that things are moved and caused by things other than themselves; therefore, the universe must also have a Prime Mover or cause to explain its existence. - The principle of sufficient reason argues that an infinite series of causes is not a full or complete explanation and as a result, it is correct to seek an external, first cause or explanation for the universe. - The Big Bang theory supports the notion of a beginning, but the oscillating universe theory posits this could be part of an infinite series of universes therefore it need not have 'God' or any other uncaused cause to explain it. - The argument that everything that exists has a cause external to itself would suggest God requires a cause, but this is simply denied by the cosmological argument; for this reason, it can be rejected as a sound conclusion. Candidates who show achievement only against AO1 will not be able to gain marks beyond the top of Level 1.

Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1–3	• A narrow range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected but are unlikely to be used appropriately or accurately (AO1). • Information/issues are identified (AO2). • Judgements are supported by generalised arguments (AO2).
Level 2	4–6	• A range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected most of which are used appropriately with some inaccuracies (AO1). • Deconstructs religious information/issues which lead to a simplistic chain of reasoning (AO2). • Judgements of a limited range of elements in the question are made (AO2).
Level 3	7–9	• 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).

Question number	Indicative content
4(a)	8 marks AO1 AO1 will be used by candidates to demonstrate knowledge, understanding and specialist language and terminology when responding to the question. Candidates may refer to the following. • The Design Argument is an <i>a posteriori</i>, inductive argument which tries to prove the existence of God. • The Design Argument attempts to identify different empirical features of the world such as order, purpose and regularity that constitute evidence of design inferring the existence of God. • Aquinas' Fifth Way is an early version of the Design Argument and is also known as the 'teleological' argument. • Paley's watchmaker analogy argues that the material universe exhibits the same kind of functional complexity as a watch. • A criticism of the Design Argument is the fact that although some of the universe may appear to be designed there is evidence of bad design such as natural evil.

Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1–2	• A narrow range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected but are unlikely to be used appropriately or accurately (AO1). • Knowledge and understanding addresses a narrow range of key religious ideas and beliefs with some inaccuracies (AO1). • Provides a superficial understanding of key religious ideas and beliefs (AO1).
Level 2	3–5	• A range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected, most of which are used appropriately with some inaccuracies (AO1). • Knowledge and understanding addresses a narrow range of key religious ideas and beliefs (AO1). • Develops key religious ideas and beliefs to show a depth of understanding (AO1).
Level 3	6–8	• A wide range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are carefully selected and used appropriately, accurately and sustained throughout (AO1). • Knowledge and understanding addresses a broad range of key religious ideas and beliefs (AO1). • Comprehensively develops key religious ideas and beliefs to show a depth of understanding (AO1).

Question number	Indicative content
4(b)	5 marks AO1, 15 marks AO2 AO1 will be used by candidates to underpin their analysis and evaluation. Candidates will be required to demonstrate knowledge and understanding using specialist language and terminology when responding to the question, and in meeting AO2 descriptors described below. Candidates may refer to the following in relation to AO1. • Like effects do not always have like causes so the analogy in the Design Argument is unconvincing. • There is evidence of flaws in the apparent design of the world such as earthquakes and disease. • There is an inductive leap from 'a designer' to it being God. AO2 requires candidates to develop their answers showing analytical and evaluative skills to address the question. Such responses will be underpinned by their use of knowledge and understanding. Candidates may refer to the following in relation to AO2. • Kant argued that we may impose order upon an unordered world, and this undermines the Design Argument because if there is no real order we cannot use it to infer the existence of God. • The weakness of analogy makes the Design Argument unconvincing because for something complex on such a scale, if like effects have like causes it would lead to many designers and not to the one designer: God. • Evolution can explain the existence of order and complexity in terms of a series of small changes and this weakens the Design Argument because there is no need for a designer God to explain the apparent design or purpose. • The evidence of poor design in the world seriously challenges the Design Argument because it would question the nature of such a designer and therefore to conclude it is the God of Christian belief is unconvincing. • The level of beauty that is unnecessary for survival though strengthens the Design Argument making it convincing because this outweighs the problems and is evidence of a loving designer. • The weakness of the inductive leap to the designer being God is over-ruled for many by the chances of all of these variables coming about by chance being so slim that God does seem to be the best explanation; therefore, the Design Argument is convincing even allowing for its weaknesses. Candidates who show achievement only against AO1 will not be able to gain marks beyond the top of Level 1.

Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1–5	• A narrow range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected but are unlikely to be used appropriately or accurately (AO1). • Information/issues may be selected (AO2). • Makes basic connections between a limited range of elements in the question (AO2). • Judgements are supported by generic arguments (AO2). • Judgements made with no attempt to appraise evidence (AO2).
Level 2	6–10	• A limited range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected, some of which are used appropriately with some inaccuracies (AO1). • Deconstructs religious information/issues (AO2). • Makes connections between a limited range of elements in the question (AO2). • Judgements of a limited range of elements in the question are made (AO2). • Judgements made with little or no attempt to appraise evidence (AO2).
Level 3	11–15	• A range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected, most of which are used appropriately with some inaccuracies (AO1). • Deconstructs religious information/issues, which lead to a simple chain of reasoning (AO2). • Makes connections between many but not all of the elements in the question (AO2). • Judgements of a limited range of elements in the question are made (AO2). • Judgements are supported by an attempt to appraise evidence (AO2).
Level 4	16–20	• 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).