



National
Qualifications
2026

2026 Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies

Religious and Philosophical Questions

Higher

Question Paper Finalised Marking Instructions

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General marking principles for Higher Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies

Always apply these general principles. Use them in conjunction with the detailed marking instructions, which identify the key features required in candidates' responses.

- (a) Always use positive marking. This means candidates accumulate marks for the demonstration of relevant skills, knowledge and understanding; marks are not deducted for errors or omissions.
- (b) If a candidate response does not seem to be covered by either the principles or detailed marking instructions, and you are uncertain how to assess it, you must seek guidance from your team leader.
- (c) Award marks where candidates give points of knowledge without specifying the context, unless it is clear that they do not refer to the context of the question. Award a **maximum of 8 marks** where the candidate has not attempted the skill in a **20 mark** question.

In this question paper the following skills are assessed:

- i. knowledge and understanding
- ii. analysis
- iii. evaluation.

(i) **Knowledge and understanding**

Knowledge and understanding involves presenting relevant and accurate content. Award a knowledge and understanding mark where a candidate presents a relevant and accurate point which may include:

- accurate factual information
- relevant factual information
- reference to sources
- case studies
- examples
- viewpoints
- description of arguments.

(ii) **Analysis**

Analysis involves doing something with factual information, for example identifying parts, the relationship between them, and their relationships with the whole; drawing out and relating implications.

Award an analysis mark where a candidate presents a relevant, accurate and developed point which may include:

- links between different components
- links between component(s) and the whole
- links between component(s) and related concepts
- similarities and contradictions
- consistency and inconsistency
- different views/interpretations
- possible consequences/implications
- the relative importance of components
- understanding of underlying order or structure.

(iii) Evaluation

Evaluation involves making a judgement or measurement based on an issue. Award an evaluation mark where a candidate presents a relevant, accurate and developed point which may include:

- the relevance and/or importance and/or usefulness of a viewpoint or source:
- positive and negative aspects
- strengths and weaknesses
- any other relevant evaluative comment.

Use of sources

Award marks where candidates use a referenced and relevant source in support of their knowledge and understanding, critical analysis, evaluation or a reasoned view.

Overview of detailed marking instructions

Knowledge, analysis and evaluation questions (20 marks)

Award up to a **maximum of 10 marks** for each developed point of knowledge used to support the analysis and evaluation.

Award up to **5 marks** for analytical comments and up to **5 marks** for reasoned evaluative comments.

Marking instructions for each question

Part A – Origins

Question			General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Specific marking instructions for this question
1.			This question focuses on knowledge, analysis and evaluation. 5 marks are available for analysis and 5 marks are available for evaluation. A maximum of 10 marks are available for knowledge and understanding that is relevant to both the question and the answer.	20	Purpose The purpose of the question is to allow candidates the opportunity to present knowledge and understanding about scientific explanations for the origins of the universe and to analyse and evaluate these arguments. Candidates may also present, analyse and evaluate religious explanations of the origins of the universe. Specific marking instructions Marks will be capped at 8 knowledge and understanding marks if a candidate fails to attempt both analysis and evaluation skills. Knowledge and understanding – up to 10 marks may be awarded for: • description of scientific explanations of the origins of universe • description of religious explanations of the origins of universe • relevant sources Examples of knowledge points: • The Big Bang Theory states that the universe began around 13.7 billion years ago • Literal Christians believe that the creation story in the Bible is true because God's word is infallible Analysis – up to 5 marks may be awarded for: • analysis of scientific explanations of the origins of universe • analysis of religious explanations of the origins of universe • analysis of different sources used to support the explanations

Question			General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Specific marking instructions for this question
					Examples of analysis points: • a consequence of the evidence to support the scientific account of the origins of universe is that it is the only explanation necessary, removing the need for a Creator God – an assumption based on blind faith rather than reasoned interpretation and judgement • an implication of the Liberal Christian response is that it presents a more believable account for modern day Christians, allowing them to reconcile their faith in God as Creator with convincing scientific findings • an implication of the Literal Christian response is that there is little challenge to their faith; the theory of the Big Bang is not in the Bible, therefore it holds no validity in comparison to God's word Evaluation – up to 5 marks may be awarded for: • supported judgements on the religious/scientific explanations for the origins of universe Examples of evaluation points: • I agree with the scientific explanations for the origins of the universe as there is physical evidence that we can view to back up the theory. The fact that we can physically view this evidence in the form of fossils, rocks, and radiation, makes the scientific view of origin of the universe a strong one • however, I also think this view has some flaws as science has been wrong about things before and may be wrong about this too; the Big Bang Theory is a new paradigm for scientists and it replaced the Newtonian paradigm which was that the universe was like a clockwork machine

Part B – The existence of God

Question			General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Specific marking instructions for this question
2.			This question focuses on knowledge, analysis and evaluation. 5 marks are available for analysis and 5 marks are available for evaluation. A maximum of 10 marks are available for knowledge and understanding that is relevant to both the question and the answer.	20	Purpose The purpose of this question is to give candidates the opportunity to present knowledge and understanding about non-religious arguments against the existence of God, and to analyse and evaluate these arguments. Candidates may also present, analyse and evaluate religious arguments for the existence of God. Specific marking instructions Marks will be capped at 8 knowledge and understanding marks if a candidate fails to attempt both analysis and evaluation skills. Knowledge and understanding – up to 10 marks may be awarded for: • description of non-religious arguments which challenge the existence of God • description of religious arguments for the existence of God • relevant sources Examples of knowledge points: • The Big Bang Theory suggests that about 13.7 billion years ago, the entire universe was condensed into a single, incredibly hot and dense point • The Theory of Evolution is the scientific explanation for how life on Earth has changed and diversified over time Analysis – up to 5 marks may be awarded for: • analysis of non-religious arguments against the existence of God • analysis of religious arguments for the existence of God • analysis of different viewpoints/relevant sources Example of analysis points: • an implication of the Big Bang Theory is that the universe has a beginning and is not eternal, which challenges the idea that the universe has always existed in its current form • The Theory of Evolution challenges traditional views of creation, especially in religious contexts, by suggesting that life on Earth evolved through natural processes rather than being created by an intelligent designer

Question			General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Specific marking instructions for this question
					Evaluation – up to 5 marks may be awarded for: - supported judgements on the non-religious arguments against the existence of God Examples of evaluation points: - I agree with the Big Bang Theory as it is based on physical laws and observable phenomena, making it a more acceptable explanation for people who view the world through a secular, science-based lens - I agree with the Theory of Evolution because it offers a scientifically supported, natural explanation for the diversity and development of life on Earth that fits with my understanding of the world and is grounded in evidence from multiple scientific disciplines

Part C – The problem of suffering and evil

Question			General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Specific marking instructions for this question
3.			This question focuses on knowledge, analysis and evaluation. 5 marks are available for analysis and 5 marks are available for evaluation. A maximum of 10 marks are available for knowledge and understanding that is relevant to both the question and the answer.	20	Purpose The purpose of the question is to give candidates the opportunity to present knowledge and understanding about human's responsibility for suffering and evil and to analyse and evaluate these arguments. Candidates may also present, analyse and evaluate explanations on whether responsibility lies with humans. Specific marking instructions Marks will be capped at 8 knowledge and understanding marks if a candidate fails to attempt both analysis and evaluation skills. Knowledge and understanding – up to 10 marks may be awarded for: • description of arguments that claim humans are responsible for suffering and evil • description of arguments that claim God is responsible for suffering and evil • relevant sources Examples of knowledge points: • humans use their free will to disobey God, causing suffering and evil to come into the world • Adam and Eve were tempted by the serpent to disobey God, eating the forbidden fruit, and suffering was a consequence of this evil Analysis – up to 5 marks may be awarded for: • analysis of the arguments that claim humans are responsible for suffering and evil • analysis of the arguments that claim God is responsible for suffering and evil • analysis of different viewpoints/relevant sources Examples of analysis points: • an implication of the belief that humans cause suffering and evil is that we are as powerful as God as we can also cause things to exist • a consequence of believing that humans are responsible for suffering and evil, is that we can stop it by keeping the commandments and not disobeying God

Question			General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Specific marking instructions for this question
					Evaluation – up to 5 marks may be awarded for: - supported judgements on the extent to which responsibility for suffering and evil lies with humans Examples of evaluation points: - I agree that humans are responsible for suffering and evil as morally evil acts are entirely our choice. We are told in the commandments do not kill, but some people choose to do so - I disagree that humans are responsible, as we are permitted to disobey the commandments and harm others by an all-powerful God who could easily stop it, so he must take responsibility

Part D – Miracles

Question			General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Specific marking instructions for this question
4.			This question focuses on knowledge, analysis and evaluation. 5 marks are available for analysis and 5 marks are available for evaluation. A maximum of 10 marks are available for knowledge and understanding that is relevant to both the question and the answer.	20	Purpose The purpose of the question is to give candidates the opportunity to present knowledge and understanding of non-religious explanations for miracles, analyse the non-religious explanations and present a reasoned conclusion on the extent to which they agree with the explanations. Specific marking instructions Marks will be capped at 8 knowledge and understanding marks if a candidate fails to attempt both analysis and evaluation skills. Knowledge and understanding – up to 10 marks may be awarded for: • a description of miracles • a description of non-religious explanations for miracles • a description of religious counterarguments • relevant sources Examples of knowledge points: • Hume states that a miracle is, ‘a transgression of a law of nature’ • Hume argues that there are not enough trustable sources to confirm the existence of miracles • many Christians visit Lourdes in France when they are sick to pray for healing Analysis – up to 5 marks may be awarded for: • analysis of non-religious explanations for miracles • analysis of religious explanations for miracles • analysis of evidence used to support non-religious and religious explanations implications/interpretations of sources Examples of analysis points: • a consequence of this is that the testimonies of all the miracles that have been recorded so far have been falsified or not genuine • a consequence of the argument that all the cases of healing at Lourdes are not miracles, is that it belittles the suffering and desperation of the people who are genuinely sick

Question			General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Specific marking instructions for this question
					Evaluation – up to 5 marks may be awarded for: • judgement on the strengths/weaknesses of non-religious explanations of miracles • judgement on the strengths/weaknesses of religious explanations of miracles • judgement on the extent to which these explanations can be compatible evaluation of sources • overall judgement on the question Examples of evaluation points: • I agree with non-religious explanations for miracles as they emphasise the power of effort, innovation, and determination, which can motivate individuals to take action in their own lives • however, I disagree as for religious people, like Christians, as the idea of a miracle is deeply tied to faith and divine power. Non-religious explanations may feel empty or incomplete to those who see miracles as a spiritual connection to a higher power

[END OF MARKING INSTRUCTIONS]