
(8061/62/63) GCSE RS

Supporting Marking Guidance

Version 1.0

Introduction

As part of their training, all examiners were given the following guidance document along with the question papers, mark scheme and standardisation materials for the particular component they were marking for AQA. It was written by the senior examining team. The purpose of the guidance was to clarify key aspects of the mark scheme and further ensure consistency of approach across the components and specifications. Examiners were instructed that the guidance should be read alongside the question paper, mark scheme and standardising materials and that the guidance did not reflect a change in the standard applied.

We hope that this guidance can now aid you in your understanding of how the standard was applied and deepen your understanding of how the key aspects of the mark scheme work.

GCSE Religious Studies

Marking Points – A Common Approach

1 mark questions

The answer in the mark scheme is the only one that should be credited with 1 mark. There are no alternative answers allowed.

2 mark questions

These questions will ask, 'Give two ...'

However, some students may give **more than** the two answers required by the question. In such instances,

- **Award for the first two answers only, wherever they appear.**
- If a student gives more than one answer on the first line and another answer / other answers on the second line, the 'first two answers' will be the **first two** on the first line and **only these two** should be considered for marks. Other answers must be ignored.
- If on the first line the first two answers given are correct, award two marks, regardless of what is written elsewhere in the answer.
- If the first two answers can only be awarded one mark yet there is a third answer that is correct, this correct third answer must be ignored and no mark given for it.
- However, if the student gives some **elaboration after the first answer**, which is clearly developing their first answer, (which they are not required to do), do not consider this elaboration to be their second answer (unless the elaboration happens to contain a second correct answer to the question asked), regardless of whether there are other answers provided. In this case, the second answer also, if correct, may be credited for the second mark.

4 mark questions

Apply positive marking to 4 and 5 mark questions.

- The 4 and 5 mark questions require **two** pieces of information to be given with a second mark for each one if extra accurate and relevant detail is provided.
- One mark must be given for **each of any two correct points**, wherever they appear in the complete answer, with a further mark for each that contains extra detail that is both accurate and relevant.
- If more than two points are made, award marks to the two which earn most credit, regardless of where they appear, and ignore any others.

Example:

Q: Explain two contrasting ways a Jewish family might keep dietary laws in the home.

A *'One way Jewish families might keep dietary laws is to have different compartments in the fridge or separate fridges completely, for dairy and meat. This is because combining them is trefah due to the command in the Torah.'*

This is clearly an accurate and relevant answer for which two marks would be awarded because it contains extra accurate and relevant detail (more than is required for 2 marks).

B *'One way Jewish families might keep dietary laws is to have different compartments in the fridge or separate fridges completely, for dairy and meat.'*

This is the **bare minimum** for two marks – mention of meat and milk as the reason for separate fridges provides just enough accurate and relevant detail.

The 'Great Britain' 4 mark question

Specification A and Short Course themes papers: These are questions which include the instruction:

'In your answer you should refer to the main religious tradition of Great Britain and one or more other religious traditions.'

- If the answer does not explicitly refer to 'Christianity', 'Christians' or a Christian denomination such as Catholics as the main religious tradition of Great Britain, but nevertheless **the religion is clearly identified in some way**, eg a reference to 'church', 'vicar', etc., **award up to two marks** for this section of the answer, provided it is correct (one mark) and contains accurate and relevant detail (two marks).
- If there is **no reference to Christianity** or anything which identifies the answer as relating to Christianity, **this section of the answer must not be given any marks**. The answer as a whole can receive a maximum of two marks but only if a correct

and appropriately detailed explanation of the belief of the other religious tradition is given.

Specification B: The GB question here is different, eg 'Explain two contrasting beliefs of Islam/Judaism and the main religious tradition of Great Britain about.... You should name the main religious tradition of Great Britain in your answer.'

This question specifically requires students to **'name'** the main religious tradition of Great Britain, so for this mark, a student must state 'Christianity' or 'Christian'.

The 'influence' question

Some 4 mark questions ask for an explanation of how a certain belief influences people. Although students do not have to use the word 'influence' in their answers, they do need to make it clear how the belief or teaching has influenced believers. They may use words such as 'affect, inspire or encourage' or phrases which suggest this.

Example:

Q: *Explain two ways in which belief in the Five Roots of Usul ad-Din influences Shi'a Muslims today.*

'One way that this belief may influence Muslims today is the belief in the justice of God. This teaches Muslims that God is just and wise and will treat everyone fairly – a comforting idea to Muslims today.

Another way is through the belief that Muhammad is the most important prophet. Muslims see Muhammad as the 'perfect example' so they can use his life as a guide if they ever feel conflicted'

This answer addresses how the belief influences Muslims. Two of the Five Roots are included and the ideas of comfort and guidance show how Muslims are influenced by them. 4 marks should be awarded. Without the reference to comfort and guidance, there would be no indication of influence so only 2 marks should be awarded.

Answers which correctly explain beliefs but do **not** show ways in which believers are influenced should **only receive one mark for each 'way' to a maximum of two marks if two correct ways are given.**

Mark schemes for 2020 have a clear reference to the need to award 3 or 4 marks only if there is an indication of influence: **'To be a 'detailed explanation' the 'influence' of the way must be included.'**

The Contrast and Similarities question

Note: ‘contrasting’ in these questions means ‘different’ and not necessarily opposite. So, contrasting answers do not have to make ‘opposite’ points; but they do have to be ‘different’.

The contrast may mean the student offers contrasting / different beliefs (faiths question) or contrasting / different ideas or opinions related to either the belief or the issue raised in the question (themes question).

Specification A:

Example:

Q: Explain two contrasting religious beliefs in contemporary British society about abortion.

‘Roman Catholics believe that abortion is wrong because life begins at conception. This means that abortion goes against the belief in the sanctity of life. The Church of England does not like abortions because they teach that children are a gift from God. However, they would consider an abortion if the mother’s life was at risk or if the foetus was shown to be severely deformed.’

This answer would receive 4 marks. The reasons given for a belief that abortion is wrong are different (contrasting) – life begins at conception + sanctity of life / gift from God. The second part of the second reason provides additional information about a different but accurate belief.

In a **similarities** question, if students write exactly the same detailed information for two religious traditions, they may achieve 4 marks, provided the information given is correct **for both** religions.

Students who write an answer including detail in relation to one religion, for example Christianity, for which two marks are awarded, and then add simply ‘and Muslims believe the same’ will receive only one additional mark for the knowledge that Muslims believe the same (if of course the statement is correct). There is no added detail and so no second mark can be given. So potentially 3 marks (2+1) would be awarded.

Specification B:

In the Themes paper, the wording of the question is different:

‘Explain **two** contrasting beliefs in contemporary British society about...

- You must refer to a Christian view
- Your contrasting view may come from Christianity or another religious or non-religious tradition.’

This question specifically requires students to refer to a Christian view, so If there is **no reference to Christianity** or anything which identifies the answer as relating to Christianity, **one section of the answer must not be given any marks**. The answer as a whole can receive a maximum of two marks but only if a correct and appropriately detailed explanation of the belief of the other religious or non-religious tradition is given.

5 mark questions

These are marked in a similar way to the 4 mark questions and the source mark (mark 5) is gained by an accurate and relevant reference to a teaching or belief regarded as being from a **holy or authoritative source** by the religion concerned.

This includes the texts from the holy books, eg the Pali Canon, the sermons by the Buddha, the Bible (or eg 'Genesis' or 'The Parable of ...'), the Vedas and Upanishads, the Qur'an and Hadith, the Torah and Talmud and the Guru Granth Sahib), creeds, the Five Precepts, the Ten Commandments, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, statements by, for example, the Pope or Dalai Lama, etc.

Note: If an appropriate reference to a sacred writing or a source of religious belief or teaching, is given within a main point or within a point of detail in the answer, it should be counted **both** as a point or an added detail **and** as a source of authority.

To earn the 'source mark', students should give some indication that they are aware that they are referring to a belief or teaching from a sacred writing or other source of belief. Identifying the sacred writing (Bible, Qur'an etc) or naming the source (Pope, rabbi, priest) provides this indication. A quotation on its own, eg 'Love your neighbour', with no reference to a source of authority, would not be sufficient for the fifth mark.

If a student wrote, for example, simply, 'The Qur'an said it is wrong' they could get only one mark for a simple point (if correct), but not the source mark. Naming a source of authority alone without further explanation in answering the question will not receive a source mark.

References to specific teaching, eg ahimsa, kamma (karma), etc are permissible for the 'source mark' **ONLY** if they are presented as coming from **sacred writings or a source of authority**. eg 'Jesus said...', 'the Dalai Lama said...', etc.

Example

Explain two ways in which a worldwide Christian relief organisation carries out its mission overseas.

Refer to sacred writing or another source of Christian belief and teaching in your answer.

'One way that Christian Aid carries out its mission overseas is by providing money to give poor people access to clean water supplies. They are influenced by the teaching of 'love thy neighbour' which comes from the Bible. They also run campaigns against injustice, for example trying to improve the situation for people who have been displaced by war or natural disasters.'

In this answer the reference to '*the teaching of 'love thy neighbour' which comes from the Bible*' **not only provides** detail for the first point of the explanation and so would count as the second mark, **but also** counts as the reference to a source because the Bible is

specifically referred to i.e. a sacred writing or a specific belief or teaching required by the question. So, a student would be awarded 5 marks for this question.

Note: From time to time, there may be a 0.4 question asking specifically about a source of authority, eg The Apostles Creed, Dei Verbum, etc. (Although in the case of Spec B we rarely name a Catholic document in the question itself). In these cases, we may direct examiners to credit accurate and relevant quotations from the document named in the question, since again, it would be unreasonable to expect students to ascribe the quotation each time to the document being examined.

Note – Textual Studies St Mark’s Gospel: Exceptions to this guidance are 0.4 questions in the 2B textual papers where the whole question is centred around Mark’s Gospel. Here it would be unreasonable to expect students to note ‘in Mark’s Gospel’ each time they provide an accurate quotation from the Gospel. However, should they support their answer by quotations from other gospels or epistles, they would achieve the fifth mark **only** if they give the source, eg ‘Paul said..’ or ‘in Matthew’s Gospel...’etc.

12 mark questions

It is important that the whole answer is read before considering the Level to be awarded. It is likely that the answer will need reading through more than once.

Remember that the 12 mark question targets Assessment Objective 2: ‘Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief, including their significance and influence.’

Knowledge and understanding (AO1) will feature in this AO2 question but it should be used to provide detail to support the analysis and evaluation of the statement in the question and not just provided without being linked to reasoning. Answers without the required analysis and/or evaluation should not be awarded higher than level 3.

On religion specific question papers, **answers must remain focused on the religion specified for study**. If a student contrasts with other religions in their response, this will not be relevant to examiners for consideration in the awarding of a level/mark. **Responses should be credited on elements of the response related to the specified religion only** (eg only Buddhism in a Buddhism paper). Answers can draw on the beliefs of different denominations or schools of thought within the specified religion. (Religion specific papers are Spec A Paper 1; Spec B paper 1, 2X & 2Y; Short Course components 1 to 4). (**Note:** some religious believers may, of course, hold views which are in line with secular views and these will be credited accordingly).

Level 4

- To achieve Level 4, there does **not** need to be a completely balanced response. However, two different points of view and reasoned consideration of both, (including the less detailed point of view if the response is not balanced), need to be provided to achieve Level 4.

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- ‘Chains of reasoning leading to judgements’ are advisable. However, if arguments are not provided in a chain of reasoning but valid and insightful points are made and detailed, this may be a reason for awarding a lower mark but still within Level 4.
 - Be aware that students may make reasoned judgements throughout the answer, not just in the conclusion. This is perfectly acceptable for level 4.
 - Level 4 requires more than one reference to religion. In fact, for this level, it is likely that religious references will be an integral part of the answer.

Level 3

- An answer reaching Level 3 should have two clear **different** points of view. Arguments from two religious traditions which support **the same** point of view are **not** sufficient for Level 3
- One accurate and relevant reference to religion would meet the point of the criteria which states: ‘Clear reference to religion’. This however does not mean that the answer would automatically be awarded Level 3. To do so, it should also meet the other criteria.

Note: answers which do **not** have different points of view or are purely secular or contain insufficient accurate and relevant detail will not exceed Level 2 and may be Level 1.

Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPaG)

Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPaG) are assessed by separate criteria from the subject content and assessment objectives for the GCSE RS qualifications. SPaG is assessed on specific 12 mark questions across the suite of qualifications. The assessment of SPaG is clearly indicated in the question paper and mark scheme for the appropriate questions.

SPaG is awarded using a level of response approach. A best fit approach should be adopted in marking to the criteria. One or two inaccuracies in spelling, for example, would not, on their own, prevent the award of the top ‘High Performance’ level.

In order to make a judgement against the criteria a response should be at least a paragraph in length (about 20 words). It would be unusual for a response shorter than this to gain any credit for SPaG.

Some questions do not lend themselves to the use of specialist terms. Consideration should be given to the nature of the question when judging this aspect of the criteria. Specific guidance will be provided in the standardising materials for each item.

If a response gains 0 marks out of 12 against the content/skills of the question it may still be possible to award marks for SPaG. With such responses the examiner must judge the response to be a genuine attempt to answer the question set.