

A-LEVEL RELIGIOUS STUDIES

(7062)

Example responses and commentaries Paper 1

See a range of student responses that demonstrate how different levels are achieved and understand how to interpret the mark scheme.

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EXAMPLE RESPONSES



10 mark questions: A01

Levels of response mark scheme

Level and marks	Description
Level 5 9-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge and critical understanding is accurate, relevant and fully developed in breadth and depth with very good use of detailed and relevant evidence which may include textual/scriptural references where appropriate• Where appropriate, good knowledge and understanding of the diversity of views and/or scholarly opinion is demonstrated• Clear and coherent presentation of ideas with precise use of the appropriate subject vocabulary
Level 4 7-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge and critical understanding is accurate and mostly relevant with good development in breadth and depth shown through good use of relevant evidence which may include textual/scriptural references where appropriate.• Where appropriate, alternative views and/or scholarly opinion are explained• Mostly clear and coherent presentation of ideas with good use of the appropriate subject vocabulary
Level 3 5-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge and critical understanding is generally accurate and relevant with development in breadth and/or depth shown through some use of evidence and/or examples which may include textual/scriptural references where appropriate• Where appropriate, there is some familiarity with the diversity of views and/or scholarly opinion• Some organisation of ideas and coherence with reasonable use of the appropriate subject vocabulary
Level 2 3-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge and critical understanding is limited, with limited development in breadth and/or depth shown through limited use of evidence and/or examples which may include textual/scriptural references where appropriate• Where appropriate, limited reference may be made to alternative views and/or scholarly opinion• Limited organisation of ideas and coherence and use of subject vocabulary
Level 1 1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge and critical understanding is basic with little or no development• There may be a basic awareness of alternative views and/or scholarly opinion• Isolated elements of accurate and relevant information and basic use of appropriate subject vocabulary
0	No accurate or relevant material to credit

0	2	.	1
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Examine different understandings of religious experience.

[10 marks]

One understanding of religious experience is the idea of visions. Visions can be corporeal, intellectual or imaginative. Corporeal visions are those that can be seen with the physical eye, they appear in our perceived reality. St. Bernadette, for example, allegedly had a corporeal vision when she saw the Immaculate Conception out in the woods. To her, the vision was very much physically real. Imaginative visions are those seen by the mind's eye, they are still seen but are not in reality. Dreams are a good example of this. An Egyptian Pharaoh was said to have had a dream of seven thin cows devouring seven fat cows, and seven withered crops devouring seven ripe crops. Joseph interpreted the dream as a sign of seven years of famine. This vision is seen as purely in the mind. Intellectual visions are a more abstract concept, they are 'seen' but in neither a physical nor imaginary sense. Rather one appears to see without truly seeing.

Mystical experiences are another example. These are experiences concerning a sense of union with the divine. Walter Stace, for example, describes mystical experiences as being either introvertive or extrovertive, with both having a sense of union. In extrovertive experiences we keep our perception of the outside world, but in a warped and morphed manner so that any objects do not appear as they usually are. Stace describes this as a 'half way point' to introvertive experience where we lose all perceptions of the outside world, instead we are only aware of a union with the divine. William James gives four qualities of mystical experience, he describes them as ineffable, meaning that they cannot be truly recounted; they are beyond understanding of language and thus cannot be put into words. He also describes them as noetic, meaning they give direct rise to knowledge which is regarded as authoritative. He also holds that they are transient, not permanent, and lasting at most a few hours, and passive meaning that the sense of union requires no effort from the individual.

Rudolf Otto had the understanding of numinous experiences, these are experiences where you feel as if you are in the presence of something greater. To Otto, it is an apprehension of the wholly other – The Holy. These experiences are sui generis, of their own kind. They are unique experiences that are completely new. The numinous carries with it a 'mysterium tremendum et fascinans' and also a sense of inferiority at the greatness in your presence. Moses and the burning bush is a good example for in the presence of God in the burning bush, Moses felt woefully inadequate. He was in the presence of a much greater being.

This is 447 words. That is quite long as an exam answer and risks the candidate running out of time by the end of the paper.

It covers a greater breadth than necessary to reflect 'different' understandings of religious experience as the question requires, but it also develops its points and makes good use of examples. It ranges over all the types of religious experience specified for study; although other excellent answers were more selective and dealt with their chosen material, in greater depth.

Like many high level answers, it structures the response into three paragraphs, each with its own theme. Notice that it starts with a direct response to the question, avoiding a general introduction that wastes time but adds little, if anything, to the answer. It shows good knowledge and understanding of the diversity of views, its presentation is clear and it uses specialist vocabulary effectively.

Under exam conditions it would be unreasonable to expect any more.

Level 5, 10 marks

0 3 . 1

Examine why Bentham and Kant may make different decisions on moral issues.

[10 marks]

Bentham and Kant may make different decisions on moral issues due to their contrasting ideas on what is 'right' and what is 'wrong'. Bentham attributes 'right' (good) to actions which lead to the most happiness, or pleasure, for the majority. His way of thinking is therefore heavily teleological and consequentialist. Bentham is concerned with the effect of actions and how the consequences impact individuals. Kant, on the other hand, holds a rather absolute view, and is heavily deontological. Kant focuses on the action itself, and attributes 'right' and 'wrong' to the action itself rather than the effect. Actions are either good or bad right or wrong in themselves, rather than in their consequences. Kant is focused on the idea of duty where 'good' only ever comes from doing duty for the sake of duty.

It is subsequently evident how Bentham and Kant may reach different decisions on moral issues. Bentham calculates good from his hedonic calculus which considers propinquity, fecundity, duration, extent, intensity, purity and certainty. If through this calculus Bentham determines that killing one individual in a gladiator battle would bring pleasure to the majority, he would consider the action good. Kant's categorical imperative leads to a different decision. Categorical imperatives are absolute commands which cannot be contradicted. They adhere to three formulations: they must be universalisable, they must treat people as an end in themselves rather than just a means, the decision must be made as if you were the ruler of a 'kingdom of ends'. The categorical imperative contrasts the hypothetical imperative which always contains an 'If'. Since the categorical imperative is absolute and universalisable, Kant would hold that murder is wrong in every situation and would take a different view to Bentham on gladiator battles.

Bentham's method of making moral decisions is based on the idea that everyone wants to be happy, so acts which allow the majority to experience happiness are right. For Kant, the end goal is not to be happy, but to be worthy of being happy. Kant describes the 'Summum Bonum' the greatest of all goals which acts as the ultimate reward. Since Bentham views all pleasures as equal, his decisions would be made with no higher purpose, he should seek only to ensure that as many people could experience pleasure as possible.

381 words, a good length for an answer under exam conditions, (18 minutes total planning and writing time). Note the three paragraph structure which is seen in many high level answers.

Paragraph 1 is particularly focused and clear and contrasts the consequential and deontological approach. Paragraph 2 applies that to an example and offers the idea of the categorical imperative. Ideally the last formulation of this would have had a little explanation since it is not self-evident, and it may have unpacked how this applies to 'murder' a little more, but the answer is long enough as it is so we have to be realistic about what can be achieved in the time.

Level 5, 10 marks

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Examine the key ideas of David Hume and Maurice Wiles on miracles.

[10 marks]

Miracles are the idea of something happening which goes against the laws of nature or what people cannot believe. There are two types of miracle: anti-realist and realist. Realist miracles are ones that do defy the laws of nature. Whereas anti-realist miracles appear to be amazing but they do not break any laws of nature. An example of an anti-realist miracle was when a Church exploded and none of the choir was there for various reasons. This is not against the laws of nature but seems unlikely, so people call it a miracle.

Hume says that miracles defy the laws of nature meaning that they must be realist miracles. He comes up with a theory to help decide whether a miracle did happen or not. He argues that you should first question the reliability of the claim. This means can you trust what they are saying is true. They must also consider the individual, so is it likely that what they are saying is true. Hume argues that something defying the laws of nature is less likely to be true than someone lying. He uses this theory to work out if a miracle did actually occur or if it was someone lying or believing it to be a miracle when it is not. For Hume, it is more likely not to be a miracle than it is to be a miracle.

Unfortunately, only the second paragraph is relevant here and there is no reference to Wiles, which means that the maximum available for this answer was Level 3. Confusion over the meaning of realist and anti-realist is evident here.

In the relevant paragraph, the general idea that anything that defies the laws of nature must be difficult to believe is assumed but not explained, and there is a very limited attempt to explain that both the event and the reliability of the witnesses should be considered. The answer therefore goes beyond Level 1 'isolated elements' and 'no development' and so Level 2 is the best fit.

Level 2, 3 marks

0	4	.	1
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Examine differing ideas about the nature of the conscience

[10 marks]

Emile Durkheim had a non-religious idea of the conscience. He believed that our conscience is developed over time through social conditioning. We learn our moral values from the world around us which develop and change through the years as the world and society change. Freud also had a non-religious idea about the nature of the conscience. He said that our conscience is part of the super-ego.

On the other hand, there are many religious ideas about the nature of the conscience. Many people, such as Aquinas, believe it is the innate word of God guiding us in our moral decision making journeys to ensure that we make moral decisions which will lead to our final purpose, a personal relationship with God (eudaimonia).

This is a very short answer, and the material that directly addresses the target of the question is even more limited. The statements that it is 'part of the super-ego' and 'innate' Word of God are unexplained, although the first section slightly develops the point that the conscience arises from social conditioning. While Durkheim and Freud are correctly identified, it is Augustine rather than Aquinas who identifies the conscience as the innate word of God. This is just more than isolated points (Level 1)

Level 2, 3 marks.

To raise this answer to a Level 3: The same structure could have been used, but the explicit statements about what the conscience is could have been expanded with explanation of what those ideas mean.

15 mark questions: A02

Levels of response mark scheme

Level and marks	Description
Level 5 13-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A very well-focused response to the issue(s) raised• Perceptive discussion of different views, including, where appropriate, those of scholars or schools of thought with critical analysis• There is an appropriate evaluation fully supported by the reasoning• Precise use of the appropriate subject vocabulary
Level 4 10-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A well-focused response to the issue(s) raised• Different views are discussed, including, where appropriate, those of scholars or schools of thought, with some critical analysis• There is an appropriate evaluation supported by the reasoning• Good use of the appropriate subject vocabulary
Level 3 7-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A general response to the issue(s) raised• Different views are discussed, including, where appropriate, those of scholars or schools of thought• An evaluation is made that is consistent with some of the reasoning• Reasonable use of the appropriate subject vocabulary
Level 2 4-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A limited response to the issue(s) raised• Presentation of a point of view relevant to the issue with some supporting evidence and argument• Limited attempt at the appropriate use of subject vocabulary
Level 1 1-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A basic response to the issue(s) raised• A point of view is stated, with some evidence or reason(s) in support• Some attempt at the appropriate use of subject vocabulary
0	No accurate or relevant material to credit

0	2	.	2
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Process theodicy solves the problem of evil

[15 marks]

I strongly disagree with the statement that Griffin's process theodicy solves the problem of evil and argue that it fails to do so.

In support of my thesis, Griffin's process thought fails to solve the problem of evil because he avoids Epicurus' Logical problem of evil by suggesting God made the world from pre-existing matter and that is why natural disasters happen. However, the logical problem of evil argues that God cannot be omnipotent and omnibenevolent if evil exists. By suggesting that God did not fully create the world, Griffin is no longer talking about the God of classical theism because he has removed an attribute. Hence his argument fails to solve the problem and evil, and cannot really be called a theodicy, because his response does not fit as a response to Epicurus' formulation.

On the other hand, the idea of quantum mechanics supports the idea that in the subatomic reality it is chaos, thus implying that the world was made from pre-existing matter. This does also explain why we have natural disasters due to flawed material being used by God to create the universe. Griffin argues that we have moral evil due to free will and that although God hates evil, he is suffering along with his creation. Thus Griffin's process theodicy solves the problem of evil by suggesting that it is not from God and that we should fight against it and do good things.

This argument is fatally flawed because it is unthinkable for someone to worship God who is not powerful enough to create the world or seemingly solve the problem of evil. Griffin's process theodicy argues that there is no clear end or reward for acting in a morally upright way. Hence what is the point of evil and if there is no reward there seems no logical reason for someone to worship a God who started a process he couldn't control to leave us with a world where children die of cancer – an example given by Phillips when arguing that the large scale of evil points to God not-existing. Griffin argues that God tries to make the world as a means of attraction, however the problem of evil contradicts that which is why it fails to solve the problem of evil and is possibly an argument that could cause people to turn away from God.

In conclusion, Griffin's process theodicy fails to solve the problem of evil because it avoids it, instead using the idea of pre-existing matter to explain the world's existence. Griffin argues that God is omnibenevolent, but by failing to fully answer if God is omnipotent, fails to give a satisfactory to Epicurus' logical problem of evil and to the evidential problem regarding the level of suffering in the world.

461 words – a satisfactory length in the time available. There is a very clear structure to this answer which in this case leads to critical analysis. However, some who started in a similar way produced one-sided arguments that could not be awarded more than Level 2. There is a risk that this structure could lead to a lack of development of any counter-arguments because the conclusion is 'black and white' rather than more nuanced.

The answer is not 'perfect' – an ideal answer to the question might, for example, have focused more on omnipotence in the first paragraph to make a stronger link between pre-existing material and the challenge to the idea that God is both omnibenevolent and omnipotent. It is not balanced, but there is no requirement that the argument has to be, only that it should be informed by views of scholars where relevant and consider different points of view.

This answer is fully focused on the issue; it discusses different views and includes critical analysis. It would be unreasonable to expect more under exam conditions.

Level 5, 15 marks

0 4 . 2

The conscience has no value as a moral guide.

[15 marks]

Initially there is stronger evidence to suggest that the claim 'The conscience has no value as a moral guide' is a strong claim.

Firstly, there is an argument to suggest that the conscience does have value as a moral guide. For example, Schleiermacher argues that the conscience is God whispering in your ear. This therefore makes the conscience a good moral guide for many religious believers as God is a figure of goodness and guidance. For many Christians, they simply want to gain God's approval – by following his guidance they will succeed in this and into heaven. Moreover, Durkheim suggests that the conscience is a representation of social conditioning – it is guidance based on what society has told us is right or wrong (for instance to follow the law). This makes conscience a good moral guide because it ensures that the individual is adhering to the laws of society which are put in place to keep all citizens safe.

On the other hand, there are arguments to suggest that the conscience is not a good moral guide. Fromm's argument about the authoritarian conscience supports this. Fromm suggests that our conscience guides us to what authority wants us to do, and this is not necessarily moral. For example, conscience may have told Nazi soldiers to kill Jewish people, as that is what they were told to do by authority. Many civilians also conformed, showing that the conscience does not always guide an individual to the correct decision. Moreover, Freud argues that the conscience is in the super-ego within the psyche. Within this, the conscience responds to the individual's desires and gives them guidance. This suggests that the conscience is therefore not a valuable moral guide because desires are often not moral. For example, Ted Bundy's desire to kill innocent women was immoral and wrong. People must often fight their desires if they are immoral and therefore according to Freud's explanation, must sometimes also ignore the conscience also. Finally it can also be argued that Schleiermacher's suggestion that the conscience is God's whispers demonstrates that the conscience is not valuable as a moral guide because of secularisation – nowadays the majority of people are atheist and so would reject this idea.

Overall, there is stronger evidence to argue that the claim 'the conscience has no value as a moral guide' is a moderately strong claim. This is because the conscience is not scientifically proven and therefore may be due to drugs or mental illness and subsequently give misleading guidance. However, this depends on whether the individual is a religious believer as they are likely to believe it is God's guidance and therefore valuable as a moral guide.

The answer is a satisfactory length (452 words) and is structured round different understandings of conscience. It is a well-focused and well-structured answer with both arguments offered in support of the conscience as a moral guide analysed and evaluated later in the essay. The material related to Freud is less successful as some ideas are muddled, but the critique of the value of the conscience if it is an expression of desires is valid.

There is an attempt at a balanced conclusion which recognises that the value of the conscience for any individual depends on what they believe it to be.

There is very good evidence of critical analysis of arguments presented

Level 5, 13 marks.

0 1 . 2 There can be no life after death.

[15 marks]

Life after death is an issue that has been debated by scholars for centuries. The simplest answer is that we do not know if there is life after death as no one has ever come back from the dead to reveal the truth. However, there has been points put forward for each side of the argument.

One scholar who suggested that there might be life after death is John Hick who put forward his replica theory to support the idea that we come back when we die. The theory states that when we die we can come back to life in an alternate universe as an exact replica of ourselves; the same appearance, the same personality and the same genetic make up. Therefore it is possible for life to occur after death as we could continue on as a replica of ourselves in an alternate universe. Whilst this theory has attracted much criticism which many people rejecting it as being simply too ridiculous to believe, it cannot be completely discredited as there is always the possibility that we do carry on as replicas we just do not know it.

Another point that would disagree with this statement and say that there is life after death is the idea of resurrection, which is a key belief of many Christians. The account of Jesus' resurrection in the New Testament is taken by many fundamentalist Christians to be the absolute truth, meaning that for them there is no doubt that there is life after death. Some Christians reject the idea of bodily resurrection but believe that the soul is resurrected after death and either lives on with God in heaven or suffers eternal; damnation in hell. This is a key belief of the Catholic Church and suggests that there must be life after death as we will be judged for our actions once we die and then punished or rewarded accordingly.

A final theory that supports life after death is the idea that after death our minds can be put into a computer and we can continue life as a machine. One scholar who put forward his version of this was Dennett who suggested that the brain is very similar to that of a computer database and so it is possible that after death we can be downloaded onto a computer and continue living with the same thoughts and emotions long after the deaths of our physical bodies.

On the other hand however, the idea of life after death has often been completely rejected especially by atheists and those who do not believe in the existence of the soul. An example of this is Richard Dawkins who believes that the absence of God means that there cannot possibly be life after death as when we die our life is over and there is no possibility of continuation. Further evidence for there being no life after death comes from the idea of monism which states that the body and the soul are the same thing and not separate substances as believed by Aristotle. Therefore the soul cannot survive the body after death as they are the same thing meaning that when our physical body dies, our life ends.

A final point in favour of no life after death comes from the rejection of NDEs or near death experiences which are often used as evidence for life after death. However, the people who have had these experiences do not actually die and so cannot tell us what life was like after death. Furthermore, there is always the possibility that they were on drugs especially in a medical situation and so that would affect the reliability of their testimony. Therefore NDEs cannot be used as solid evidence for life after death as they are not authentic experiences of what happens when we die.

So, in conclusion, whilst the statement 'there is no life after death' can be considered true to an extent as for those who do not believe in God then life after death would seem pointless, and also the lack of a soul that is separate to the body would

suggest that when the body dies the soul dies with it. However, in saying that there is also evidence for life after death from Hick's replica theory, the concept of resurrection and the idea that we can continue living as computers, meaning that life after death cannot be discarded completely.

Longer than expected under exam conditions (737 words) and a good example of an answer, as highlighted by the Report on the Exam, that spent a lot of time describing different views without analysing them. Hick's replica theory is presented as an argument, but it is not analysed – opinions about it are merely stated. Resurrection and the idea that we might be uploaded onto a computer are described, but not presented as an argument and not analysed. A point of view from Dawkins and monism are described, but although monism is stated to be evidence it is not argued for or challenged. No argument based on NDEs in favour of life after death is offered but reasons why they cannot be proof of life after death are explained.

Therefore, this answer does consider different points of view but doesn't take them further than a presentation of the ideas. To raise this answer to a Level 4, at least some of the material would have to be presented as argument and most crucially, analysed and evaluated.

Level 3, 8 marks

0 3 . 2

Meta ethics shows that moral values are facts.

[15 marks]

Meta ethics is a variety of ways in which moral/ethical decisions can be reached. Meta ethics consists of intuitionism, divine command theory and utilitarianism.

Within the Divine Command Theory, religion teaches what our moral values should be and they follow from the word of scripture / Bible. For those who follow the divine command theory, the moral values that are taught are classed as brute fact due to the nature and the significance of the Bible's importance. To go against the moral values that are taught would be to go against the word of God. Yet these facts won't hold true for atheists.

Whereas in intuitionism you follow what you innately know to be true and you follow what you believe to be moral. For the individual what they believe to be moral / moral values will be a fact for them, however, those moral values may not be applicable to everyone so are therefore not able to be defined as brute fact for everyone. On the other hand, due to everyone having intuition it is universable across all religions /non religions there will be many moral values such as do not kill that holds true for most people.

In Rule utilitarianism, moral values that are for the greater good eg 'don't steal' become official laws/rules which raises their significant importance making it a fact so that law do not steal can be seen as the fact that stealing is wrong /immoral. In addition to this there is strong rules which are laws that should absolutely be followed whereas weak rules is more like guidelines.

To contrast Act Utilitarianism focuses what moral actions should be carried out which will create the most happiness in each situation. Meta ethics does not show that moral values are facts but rather that they are theories to help you choose / make moral decisions.

311 words –shorter than expected in the time available (27 minutes).

There are two points of view related to the issue so the answer has to be worth more than Level 2, but it is more a case of asserting that these are not facts for everyone, rather than making a case in support of that view, so the answer cannot be at the top of Level 3 –Level 3, 8 marks.

To improve the answer, reasons why, for example, Divine Command theory does not show that moral values are facts should be considered.

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