



# GCSE AQA Religious Studies A Practice Papers

Component 2: Thematic Studies  
Theme C: The Existence of God and Revelation

Update v1.2, October 2025

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# Teacher's Introduction

This resource consists of a selection of practice exam-style questions and mark schemes for **Theme C: The Existence of God and Revelation** of the AQA Specification A, Paper 2A: the religious, philosophical and ethical themes paper for the non-textual studies route through the qualification.

Across the range of Practice Exams for themes A–F, the questions are numbered as per the specimen materials and past papers published by AQA, so that all three examples for each theme have the same question number. So all three examples for theme C in this resource are numbered '03', for example.

The 'themes' questions can be answered from any religious perspective; they are general questions rather than focused on or targeted at a single religion. Indicative material from all six religions available for study is, therefore, included in the mark schemes.

The mark scheme content given is indicative, meaning that it includes a selection of material deemed likely to appear across a range of candidate responses, but they do not seek to list all possible material exhaustively. No particular branch or denomination of a religious tradition is required by the specification or expected in responses to questions; any correct, relevant material can be used.

The cover sheet provided at the start of each theme A practice exam divides the total timing by four, in order to replicate the time that AQA recommends students spend on each of the four themes in the real exam (25 minutes). Marks are divided in the same way.

A cover sheet for the full exam (all four themes) is provided at the end of this resource, should you wish to purchase all four themes and construct a complete paper from these.

January 2019

## Update v1.2, October 2025

As per the exam board assessment updates, the following changes have been made to these papers:

- "contrasting" replaced with "different" in the 4 mark question
- 5-mark question replaced with a 6-mark question
- 2-mark question reduced to a 1-mark question

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# Schemes of Assessment

## Assessment Objectives

- Assessment Objective 1 has three elements, one of which is assessed in each of the first four questions for each theme. These questions will always require knowledge and understanding of religion. These three components of AO1 are:
  - ✓ AO1(1) Knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including practices and sources of authority
  - ✓ AO1(2) Knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including influence on individuals, communities and society
  - ✓ AO1(3) Knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including differences and similarities between and within religions
- Assessment Objective 2 is always assessed via the 12-mark questions. The objective is to analyse and evaluate aspects of religion, including their significance and influence.

## Allocation of Marks

Questions assessing Assessment Objective 1 are worth 1, 1, 4 and 6 marks. Responses to these are not judged according to levels of response but are points-marked, with marks awarded according to the amount of knowledge demonstrated and the ways in which it is deployed in relation to the question.

A mark is awarded for a correct point, up to the number of points requested by the question.

Where there are 4 marks available, the question specifies that two distinct points must be made to answer it adequately. Each one of those two points can gain a mark if it is correct and relevant. A second mark is also available for each of these points, and that mark is given for appropriate development or explanation beyond the basic statement which gained the first mark.

For the 6-mark questions the final mark available is awarded for the reference to sources or teachings as required by the question. One mark is awarded for naming a relevant source of authority, and one mark for the application. Each mark can be awarded individually, and if the source is both named and applied, then two marks should be awarded.

Questions assessing Assessment Objective 2 are 12-mark questions. Marks are allocated according to the following levels of response:

One point of view stated, with limited justification	1–3 marks	(12 marks) Plus, a possible 3 marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPaG)
Different arguments for and against, with justification OR several linked and justified arguments supporting one position This is the highest level which can be reached if only one point of view is considered or there is no mention of religion	4–6 marks	
Good arguments on either side of the issue, well justified and linked together Clear reference to religion	7–9 marks	
Very well argued. Arguments on either side are linked together and fully justified, leading to a reasoned conclusion Clear and appropriate reference to religion applied to the question	10–12 marks	

## Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar

Marks are awarded for spelling, punctuation and grammar. These marks are awarded based on the candidates' responses to the 12-mark questions only. The best of these marks will be included in the candidates' total for the paper.

No response is given OR the response contains no material relevant to the question asked OR the spelling, punctuation and grammar demonstrated in the response do not meet threshold performance	0 marks	
Spelling and punctuation are reasonably accurate Any errors in grammar do not hinder the overall communication of meaning A limited range of appropriate specialist terms is used	1 mark	Threshold
Spelling and punctuation are mainly accurate The rules of grammar are used to give an overall clarity of meaning A good range of appropriate specialist terms is used	2 marks	Intermediate
Spelling and punctuation are consistently accurate The rules of grammar are used effectively to control and communicate meaning A wide range of specialist terms is used	3 marks	High

# Religious Studies

## Paper 2A: Non-textual Studies

### Theme C: The Existence of God and Revelation

#### Practice Paper 1

**Time allowed**

25 minutes

**Instructions**

Answer **all** of the questions.

**Information**

The total number of marks available for this paper is **24** plus an additional **3** marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Spelling, punctuation and grammar will be assessed in the 12-mark question.

Question	Maximum Marks
01.1	1
01.2	1
01.3	4
01.4	6
01.5	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>SpaG</b>	<b>3</b>

03.1 Which of the following terms means 'all powerful'?

A) Omniscient      B) Transcendent      C) Omnipotent

03.2 Give **one** way of seeking knowledge of the divine.

03.3 Explain **two** different views in contemporary British society about the existence of God. You should make reference to at least one religious tradition in your answer.

03.4 Explain **two** religious beliefs about revelation. Refer to Scripture or other sources of religious teaching and belief in your answer.

03.5 'Visions are only important if you have one yourself.' Evaluate this statement.

In your answer you should:

- use reasoned arguments to support the statement
- use reasoned arguments to support a different view
- refer to religious arguments
- reach a justified conclusion

You may also refer to non-religious arguments.



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03.1 Which of the following terms means 'all powerful'?

- ☐ A) Omniscient    ☐ B) Transcendent    ☐ C) Omnipotent

03.2 Give **one** way of seeking knowledge of the divine.

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- use reasoned arguments to support the statement
- use reasoned arguments to support a different view
- refer to religious arguments
- reach a justified conclusion



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## **Preview of Questions Ends Here**

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This is a limited inspection copy. Sample of questions ends here to avoid students previewing questions before they are set. See contents page for details of the rest of the resource.

## Mark Scheme

03.1 Which of the following is a form of special revelation?

- A) Scripture      B) The natural world      C) Reasoned thought

Correct response: Visions

03.2 Give one philosophical argument for the existence of God.

Responses may include the following, but any relevant point will be accepted: teleological, cosmological, first cause, ontological, religious experience.

03.3 Explain two different beliefs in contemporary British society about miracles. You should make reference to at least one religious tradition in your answer.

Responses should include reference to Christianity as the main religious tradition in Britain.

Miracles are extraordinary events that cannot be explained by ordinary science; therefore, usually explained with reference to the supernatural and/or the divine. It can be argued that they are simply phenomena that science does not yet understand.

Responses may include the following, but any relevant point will be accepted:

Buddhism:

- Buddhism does accept that inexplicable and extraordinary things happen; but does not attribute these happenings to God; instead, miraculous powers are seen as a path toward enlightenment
- The Buddha was able to perform miracles but preferred not to; miraculous powers such as flight, bilocation and telepathy do not contribute to the end of dukkha (suffering)
- The Vinaya Pitaka bans monks or nuns with these powers from ordination

Christianity:

- Christianity has its origins in a miracle: the resurrection of Christ; if there were no resurrection, there would be no Christianity, so Christians clearly believe miracles are real
- Jesus is said to have performed miracles as part of his ministry; his followers believed in him and performed miracles, even after their deaths

Hinduism:

- Many Hindu stories involve miracles demonstrating the power of the divine; for example, Prahlada, who survived many attempts to kill him, who was ultimately saved by Vishnu's avatar Narasimha (the man-lion)
- Some Hindus believe that things which appear miraculous only appear so because we are ignorant of the true nature of things
- The material world, in which miracles take place, is not the most real; in Hinduism; for many schools of Hindu thought liberation depends on realizing that this is the delusion that this world is ultimately or absolutely real

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#### Islam:

- The Qur'an uses the term ayah (sign) to refer to miracles; they are said to happen only by Allah's will
- Many of the prophets were granted miracles so that people could believe in them; the night journey and the splitting of the moon were miracles granted to Muhammad
- The Qur'an itself is considered to be a miracle, not just because it was revealed to Muhammad directly by Allah but because it is unique, perfect and in a form of the written word: 'do they say, "He fabricated the Messengers, then they produce a recital like unto it, if it be that they speak the truth?"'

#### Judaism:

- Miracles describe occasions when G-d intervenes in the world to bring about something that would not otherwise happen; some Jews believe that although G-d has the power to suspend the physical laws created by G-dself as punishment, He does not do so
- The Torah does include accounts of miracles, performed by G-d, such as the parting of the Red Sea, the manna which fed them for 40 years in the desert

#### Sikhism:

- While there are stories of the Sikh Gurus performing miracles, it is believed that miracles should not be performed to impress people or to persuade them to follow a particular path; for these reasons is being manmukh (self-focused) and allowing the ego to take over
- Bhai Gurdas, who was the original scribe for the Adi Granth, recorded the Sikh belief in miracles, saying that there is no miracle except 'the True Name' (Bhai Gurdas)

### 03.4 Explain two religious views about the problem of evil and suffering against the existence of God.

Refer to Scripture or other sources of religious teaching and belief.

Responses may include the following, but any relevant point will be accepted.

The existence of evil and suffering is often used as an argument in support of the claim that God does not exist. It is suggested that a loving deity could not allow terrible things to happen to innocent people. This argument considers both the possibility that the divine has purpose and the possibility that human understanding and ideas that present evil as deserved or the result of natural causes.

#### Buddhism:

- The traditional presentation of the problem of evil is not an issue for Buddhism as there are no doctrines regarding belief in an omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent deity
- The Four Noble Truths of Buddhism recognise the existence of suffering (dukkha) and that it can be stopped; however, it is stopped by becoming liberated from the cycle of rebirth through human effort rather than divine intervention
- The law of karma operates within samsara, meaning actions have consequences regardless of the involvement or otherwise of a deity

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#### Christianity:

- The philosophical problem of evil is constructed around a Christian nature of God; the inconsistent triad posits that if God is omnipotent, benevolent, then evil and suffering should not exist so there is something that Christians believe God to be
- Christians often solve the problem of evil by recognising that they cannot understand what God's purposes are; the suffering that they experience is for the greater good
- Christianity also conceives of evil as a response to the Fall of Adam for original sin and/or a consequence of humanity exercising its free will; this to happen or we do not really have free will at all

#### Hinduism:

- The traditional presentation of the problem of evil is not much of an issue because it does not require belief in a single omnipotent, omniscient God
- The operation of the law of karma explains the existence and perpetuation of suffering from evil since it has been earned and, if accepted, will lead to better rebirth
- Violence and destruction are not inherently evil in the context of dharma; they are necessary to allow for new creation, while violence may be necessary

#### Islam:

- Muslims believe that the world Allah created is perfect; when humans suffer as part of Allah's plan, which human beings cannot expect to fully understand
- For many Muslims, suffering is permitted by Allah in order to test and prove themselves worthy of an afterlife in paradise; Shaytan is allowed for the same reason
- The Qur'an says that 'nothing happens to you except in accordance with Allah's will. Anyone who believes in Allah, Allah will guide his heart. Allah knows what you do' (Surah 64:11)

#### Judaism:

- According to Judaism, God is both all-powerful and good, but God is not responsible for the suffering in the world, either directly or because of the consequence of giving humans free will
- Satan, or the Adversary, is seen by many Jews as an agent of God; God would not be allowed to exist; they argue that Satan is allowed to tempt people to evil for God's purposes
- Other Jewish thinkers have described Satan as a metaphor for the human inclination to do evil in the form of abusing/misusing physical resources (e.g. gluttony)

#### Sikhism:

- Sikhism teaches that God is loving and that the world exists because God gave humanity free will and the potential to be either good or evil; they choose to act; if they are deluded by maya or they let human passions rule, evil will result
- Sikhs also believe in karma, which is the consequences of human actions; karma is a result of karma built up in previous lifetimes – the Adi Granth speaks of a field of karma in this age; whatever you plant, you shall harvest

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03.5 'Philosophical arguments cannot prove that God is real.'  
Evaluate this statement.

In your answer you should:

- use reasoned arguments to support the statement
- use reasoned arguments to support a different view
- refer to religious arguments
- reach a justified conclusion

You may also refer to non-religious arguments.

Responses may include some of the following evidence and arguments including non-religious arguments, which will be credited:

**Arguments in support of the question:**

- Philosophical arguments are abstract and separate from real life and words
- Nothing can either prove or disprove the existence of God to other than personal faith and experience
- Even if it is not possible to demolish the proposed argument, it does not mean we do not believe in God; therefore, philosophical arguments have only prove things in an abstract way

**Arguments in support of other views:**

- People who believe in God have reasons to do so, which are supported by philosophical arguments put these into words
- Proving the existence of God is not the same as proving other things; anything else; proof in this context is about convincing people, not using the philosophical arguments if they were not convincing

Specific religious teachings and/or sources of authority that might be used:

**Buddhism:**

- Many Buddhists would simply avoid involvement in such arguments; their contribution to what really matters, which is achieving enlightenment
- Gods in Buddhism are not supreme beings, beyond time and space; they are in the realm of samsara; proof of this would require proof of samsara, which is by enlightened beings

**Christianity:**

- Christian philosophers formed many of the classic philosophical arguments: the design argument (Paley/Aquinas), the cosmological argument (Descartes/Anselm) so, clearly, they feel they can prove God; however, Christian philosophers have also critiqued their own arguments
- Other philosophers formed arguments that have been used as a basis for the existence of God; Pascal's wager was intended less as an argument than a statement of the reality of the uncertainty of the human condition – Pascal did not think his reasoning could either create or remove faith
- Different philosophers might take different positions on the question of whether their personal faith, depending on whether they consider human reason as a means of acquiring knowledge and understanding truth

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#### Hinduism:

- Whether or not God can be philosophically proven has been a central theme in the Enlightenment context that separates religion and reason; India shares that history, and its philosophical traditions have developed. Disproving God has not historically been a matter of great concern.
- Hindu philosophy asks questions about the nature of the self, the ultimate truth or reality; reflections on these might presume something essential, or reject its necessity, but that position is not the primary concern of the philosopher.
- Different Hindu schools might take different positions on the question of whether they consider human reason to be a reliable means of understanding truth.

#### Islam:

- Muslim theologians have created versions of the cosmological and teleological argument (al Kindi) for the existence of God; however, they also developed other arguments.
- Al Kindi worked to make the philosophy of Ancient Greece acceptable to Muslims, but he also thought that revelation was superior to reason in the acquisition of knowledge because it allows for things which cannot be rationally proven.

#### Judaism:

- Whether or not God can be philosophically proven has not been a central theme for Jewish philosophers, although the classic arguments from Christian philosophy have been adapted to Jewish ideas about God.
- Maimonides developed a form of cosmological argument, arguing that the eternal being of some sort must exist in order for anything else to exist. His argument was intended more to demonstrate that belief is reasonable than to prove that one should believe.

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## **Preview of Answers Ends Here**

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