



# GCSE AQA Religious Studies A Practice Papers

Component 2: Thematic Studies  
Theme F: Religion, Human Rights and Social Justice

Update v1.1, 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 E: Religion, Human Rights and Social Justice** 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 F in this resource are numbered '06', 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 v1.1, 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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\* resulting from minor specification changes, suggestions from teachers and peer reviews, or occasional errors reported by customers

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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 F: Religion, Human Rights and Social Justice

#### 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>

- 06.1 Which of the following terms best describes treating people unfairly of a single factor about them?
- A) Prejudice      B) Discrimination      C) Judgement
- 06.2 Give **one** example of what religious believers might see as an approach to social justice.
- 06.3 Explain **two** different views in contemporary British society about the responsibilities of wealth.  
You should make reference to at least one religious tradition in your answer.
- 06.4 Explain **two** religious beliefs about human rights.  
Refer to Scripture or other sources of religious teaching and belief in your answer.
- 06.5 'People should take responsibility for themselves.'  
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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- use reasoned arguments to support the statement
- use reasoned arguments to support a different view
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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

06.1 Which of the following is not a means of exploiting people in poverty?

- A) High interest rates B) People trafficking C) Fair pay D) Child labour

Correct response: Fair pay

06.2 Give one example of a form of prejudice.

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

racism, sexism, ageism, ableism

06.3 Explain two different beliefs in contemporary British society about the role of women in religion.

You should make reference to at least one religious tradition in your answer.

Responses should include reference to Christianity as the main religion in the UK.

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

Most religions do not have universal agreement on contemporary social issues, when the issue was not significant at its time/place of origin. So, issues have occurred since the origins of a religion can be used as a reason for beliefs that do not reflect contemporary values, as can virtues such as compassion. The same teaching can be interpreted in different ways, even within the same words of their texts come directly from God, and some religions have conflicting teachings. Traditional practices/teachings may also conflict with contemporary issues, and this in turn may influence teachings on that issue.

The status of women in religion is a controversial issue because of quite different differences that religious teachings make between men and women, and necessary distinctions between them, and their purpose and abilities, which are influenced by the values of the society in which the religion originated.

But in Buddhism:

- Buddhism has no teaching about creation that presents men and women as having different purposes or with different abilities; this could mean Buddhists regard men and women as equal, but it also means they are likely to be influenced by the values of the society in which the religion originated.
- The first bhikkhuni (nuns) were established as part of the Sangha by the Buddha, however, he also gave them more rules to follow, some of which were subordinate to monks – the authenticity of these is now disputed.
- Both men and women partake in the Buddha-nature, they are both equally enlightened and follow the Buddha's teachings, and both can achieve enlightenment.

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#### Christianity:

- Catholic women are not allowed to become priests because during Mass they are representing Christ and speaking his words; Jesus himself was the only representative
- Although salvation is available for both men and women through faith, the Bible includes instructions for women to be 'silent in church' (1 Corinthians 14:34) and to submit to their husbands as they do to God (Ephesians 5:22)
- Jesus allowed women to live and work among his original followers; Mary Magdalene, who saw him first upon his resurrection; these women have equal value to the religion as men

#### Hinduism:

- The Manusmriti is the source of many traditional Hindu teachings which effectively make women subordinate to men – through, for example, the requirement for women to work, even within the home (V.147) and requiring men to be treated as a god, even if he is 'devoid of good qualities' (V.154)
- Other Hindu texts support different views; the Rig Veda includes the goddess and presents the feminine as the essence and creator of all things
- Characters in the epics, such as Sita and Draupadi, are seen as role models for Hindu women; they are respected, and their virtues are praised; they have different lives and expectations from those of men

#### Islam:

- Men and women are both created by Allah and so are of equal value; they are different and have different roles in the world; men are the 'providers' and women (Surah 4:34)
- The status of women at the time of the Prophet was very low, and they had rights that were not usual at that time, including the right to own property, refuse a marriage, and study

#### Judaism:

- Men and women are both created by G-d and so are of equal value; they are different, and in traditional Judaism they have different roles and men rule over wives (Genesis 3:16)
- In Orthodox Judaism it is only men who have to keep all mitzvot; only men have positive/active commandments to do particular things, only the men have negative commandments
- Liberal and Progressive Jews often reject this distinction as being too rigid; they put the commandments of G-d; they put them together and allow women to have the same rights as men

#### Sikhism:

- The Sikh Gurus taught that women and men are absolutely equal and have the same ability to achieve salvation, and they have the same religious duties
- The social status of women at the time of the Gurus was low, and the Gurus wrote verses which specifically challenge these views; for example: 'From within woman, man is conceived; to woman he is engaged and betrothed and made good. From her, kings are born. From woman, woman is born; without her, there will be no one at all' (Adi Granth 473:7-9)
- Sikhism has no priesthood; anyone is able to read the Adi Granth; a member of the Khalsa may lead worship

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**06.4 Explain two religious beliefs about giving money to the poor. Refer to Scripture or other sources of religious teaching and belief.**

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

Charity and compassion are common virtues in most religious traditions. Teachings about the issue. However, contemporary poverty, at least, is not always obvious to an observer because poverty can be relative and the virtues of charity and compassion might also be practised in ways of which some people might argue that giving money is actually unhelpful as it can be and may be put to inappropriate uses.

**Buddhism:**

- Dana (giving or generosity) is one of the Perfections (paramitas) in Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism; these Perfections are virtues practised on the path to enlightenment
- To give without seeking anything in return helps overcome the attachment and prevent liberation
- The teachings of the Buddha emphasise that it is important not to suffer (suffering) and to show karuna (compassion)

**Christianity:**

- Christianity condemns the love of money (1 Timothy 6:10) and caring for the poor; this should be done discreetly, not to show off (Matthew 23:5-7)
- According to the parable of the sheep and the goats, when people are suffering they are also showing care for Christ (Matthew 25:31-46)
- 'Love your neighbour' and 'treat others as you would like to be treated' are principles that encourage Christians to care for the poor

**Hinduism:**

- Dana (giving) is a virtue in Hinduism; anyone can (and should) give (karmic) merit in proportion to the gift itself and their mental attitude
- Traditionally, more merit was believed to derive from giving food to Brahmins and sadhus who may be literally poor but who have chosen to live that way, considered a different group from the working poor, or those who are disabled and cannot work
- The Rig Veda (X.117) says 'let the rich satisfy the poor implorer, a duty, a pathway', while several of the Upanishads declare charity to be one of the highest duties

**Islam:**

- All Muslims are to give 2.5% of their income (different percentages apply to different types of money) as zakat; this is an obligation, and withholding it from the poor is a sin
- Sadaqah is voluntary giving to charity, in addition to the obligation of zakat once a year, but sadaqah can be given at any time
- The Qur'an says that it is righteousness to 'spend of your substance for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who borrow, for the freedom of slaves' (Surah 2:177)

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#### Judaism:

- Jews give a tenth of their income as tzedakah; this is an obligation. Giving money is the same as stealing it from the poor
- While helping people is important, most Jews believe the ultimate goal is for them to help themselves so that they do not become dependent on charity or embarrassed to be the recipient of charity
- The Torah says, 'there will always be poor people in the land' (Deuteronomy 15:7). Striving to ease suffering is a part of tikkun olam (repairing the world)

#### Sikhism:

- Vand chakna is an important principle for Sikhs; it describes the relationship between wealth and food
- However, Sikhs should not become beggars, nor should they beg. The principle is kirat karna which means to earn your food/money; it discourages people from doing this
- The Guru Granth 712:13–14 says, 'With great effort and exertion, the rich man acquires riches of Maya. He does not give anything in charity or generosity to the Saints; his wealth does not do him any good at all'

**06.5 'People should be free to practise the religion of their choice.'**  
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. Responses including non-religious arguments, will be credited:

#### Arguments in support of the question:

- Freedom of choice is an important human right, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (and similar documents) protects that right explicitly in relation to belief and religious practice
- Practising a religion that has not been freely chosen and/or accepted is meaningless and pointless
- All religions are different ways of reaching the same goal, even if the paths are different. What shouldn't matter – it is the destination that is important

#### Arguments in support of other views:

- Some religions teach that there is only one true religion – one correct way to worship God; if this is true then everyone should practise it, and encourage others to do so in their best interests
- Families should share a religion to help them remain united; it helps them to celebrate together in shared ways, be able to eat the same things, and have shared traditions
- Too much choice is bad for people; they don't think about it carefully enough and it can lead to confusion and conflict

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

Buddhism:

- The Four Noble Truths at the heart of Buddhism teach that dukkha and can be stopped as well as offering guidance on how to achieve that the Buddha's path is the only path that can work
- Buddhism is concerned with relieving suffering, and true freedom from dukkha. If conforming will cause less suffering than making a wrong with choosing to conform; however, coercion is likely to be feeding the Three Poisons.
- Attachment causes suffering; this is true whether it is attachment to an idea. Being attached to the idea that only one religion is true is the core of Buddhist teaching.

Christianity:

- Christianity teaches that human beings have free will and can, therefore, not to worship God or to act in ways pleasing to God, but they are responsible if they choose to sin
- Christianity is a proselytising religion that actively promotes its conversion; Christians believe that accepting Christianity is in every human being's best interests
- Jesus told his disciples, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.' (John 14:6), emphasising the importance of

Hinduism:

- The Rig Veda (I.164.46) says that 'the Truth is one, but sages know it by different names' commonly interpreted as a claim that all religious paths lead to the same truth. The Bhagavad Gita also supports this when Krishna says, 'many are the paths that lead to me' (II.2)
- Hinduism is an umbrella term for many different schools of thought, with the implication that different people are suited to different paths
- Hinduism has no requirement to proselytise, and Hindus do not believe that only Hinduism can lead people to liberation

Islam:

- The Qur'an says that 'there should be no compulsion in religion; the right way has become clear, and let him who will, believe, and let him who will, reject' (Surah 18:19)
- However, the Qur'an also says that 'one who disbelieves in Allah after having believed in Him, the wrath of Allah is kindled against him, and he shall have a grievous chastisement. Some Muslims scholars believe apostasy should be punished with death

Judaism:

- Judaism has no requirement to proselytise, and, for Orthodox Jews, one cannot become a Jew – you have to be born as one; this supports freedom of religion
- However, the Torah does condemn apostasy (rejecting Judaism for another religion): 'If your very own brother, or your son or daughter, or the wife you love secretly entice you, saying, "Let us go and worship other gods," you shall not listen to them. Show them no pity. Do not spare them or shield them. You shall bring them to death' (Deuteronomy 13:6–9)

Sikhism:

- Sikhism does not proselytise, and the teachings of the Gurus regard all religions as paths to the same truth: 'God is hidden within everyone; He is not within both Hindu and Muslim' (Adi Granth 483:8)
- Sikhs should be prepared to fight in defence of the helpless and oppressed, or not it is Sikhs who are the victims of it – the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev is a key event in Sikh history. Sikhs value freedom of religion as a basic right which they must protect

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## **Preview of Answers Ends Here**

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This is a limited inspection copy. Sample of answers ends here to stop students looking up answers to their assessments. See contents page for details of the rest of the resource.