



National
Qualifications
2025

2025 Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies

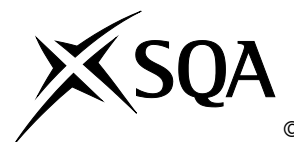
Advanced Higher

Question Paper Finalised Marking Instructions

© Scottish Qualifications Authority 2025

These marking instructions have been prepared by examination teams for use by SQA appointed markers when marking external course assessments.

The information in this document may be reproduced in support of SQA qualifications only on a noncommercial basis. If it is reproduced, SQA must be clearly acknowledged as the source. If it is to be reproduced for any other purpose, written permission must be obtained from permissions@sqa.org.uk.



General marking principles for Advanced 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) Where a candidate violates the rubric of the paper and answers both optional 30 mark questions in a section/part, all responses should be marked, and the better mark recorded.
- (d) Use the full range of marks available for each question.
- (e) The detailed marking instructions are not an exhaustive list. Award marks for other relevant points.
- (f) Award marks only where points relate to the question asked. Where candidates give points of knowledge without specifying the context, award marks unless it is clear that they do not refer to the context of the question.
- (g) In this question paper the following skills are assessed:
 - knowledge and understanding
 - analysis
 - evaluation.
- (h) For essay questions candidates must integrate these skills with their knowledge, in response to the question or statement.
- (i) For source questions candidates must demonstrate the skills of knowledge, analysis and evaluation in short responses. Source questions always use the following command words:
 - 'Describe . . .'
 - 'Analyse . . .'
 - 'Evaluate . . .'

	26–30	21–25	16–20	11–15	6–10	0–5
Overview	The essay is clearly focussed on the question at all times.	The essay is clearly focussed on the question, but at times refers generally to the topic rather than the question.	The essay is focussed on the question at times but drifts into general comments about the topic.	The essay is focussed more on the topic rather than the question.	The essay is focussed more on the topic than on the question and has information that lacks relevance.	The essay lacks relevance to both the question and/or the topic.
	9–10	7–8	5–6	3–4	1–2	0
Knowledge and understanding	KU is consistently in depth, accurate and relevant.	KU is mainly in depth, accurate and relevant.	KU has inconsistent depth but is mainly accurate and relevant.	KU lacks depth overall but is mainly accurate and relevant.	KU lacks depth overall and has issues with accuracy or relevance.	KU is superficial and is not consistently accurate or relevant.
	There is clear evidence that the candidate has drawn together relevant and appropriate information from a range of specific sources or perspectives.	There is clear evidence that the candidate has drawn together mainly relevant and appropriate information from some specific sources or perspectives.	There is some evidence that the candidate has drawn together relevant and/or appropriate information but references to sources and perspectives tend to be more general and limited.	There is evidence that the candidate has attempted to draw together relevant and/or appropriate information but references to sources and perspectives are general in nature and limited.	There is some evidence that the candidate has attempted to draw together relevant and/or appropriate information but references to sources and perspectives are brief, undeveloped, and general in nature.	The essay lacks evidence of sources and perspectives and those used lack relevance and accuracy.

	9–10	7–8	5–6	3–4	1–2	0
Analysis	The analysis clearly identifies specific issue(s) related to the question.	The analysis identifies specific issue(s) related to the question, but the depth is uneven at times.	The analysis identifies a mix of specific and general issue(s) that are related to the question and there is insufficient depth and explanation of them.	The analysis identifies some general issue(s) related to the question and there is insufficient depth or explanation.	The analysis identifies a few issue(s), but they are not clearly related to the question and coverage is superficial.	Any analysis often fails to identify issues and those that have been identified are not clearly related to the question and superficial.
	The explanation of issues takes account of a range of clearly identified perspectives and demonstrates a clear understanding of their relevance to the question.	The explanation of issues takes account of some perspectives and demonstrates a good understanding of their relevance to the question.	The issues are explained and there is evidence of some understanding of their relevance to the question which at times is general in nature.	The issues are explained and there is evidence of some understanding of their relevance to the question at times, but which is generally superficial.	The issues are briefly explained but there is evidence of some understanding of their relevance to the topic but not to the question.	There is evidence of some understanding of the topic but not the question.

	9–10	7–8	5–6	3–4	1–2	0
Evaluation	The evaluation is insightful, valid, and clearly reasoned.	The evaluation is valid, may be insightful and is mainly clearly reasoned.	The evaluation is valid but not consistently and clearly reasoned.	The evaluation is valid but not clearly reasoned and lacks sufficiency.	There is limited valid evaluation, but it is not clearly reasoned and lacks sufficiency.	The evaluation either lacks validity or relevance to the issue/question.
	It has relevant judgements on the issues and/or perspectives on the issues.	It has mainly relevant judgements on the issues and/or perspectives on the issues.	It has some relevant judgements on the issues and/or perspectives on the issues.	It has relevant judgements on the issues and/or perspectives on the issues, however it is simply a judgement with brief reasoning.	It may have judgements on the issues but there is some brief reasoning behind them.	
	Conclusions have successfully been woven throughout the essay/drawn at the conclusion of the essay.	Mainly clear conclusions have been drawn.	There has been some attempt to draw conclusions, but they lack depth.	There has been some attempt to draw brief conclusions, but they lack depth.	Conclusions may be restricted to closing comments.	

Marking instruction for each question

Section 1 – Philosophy of religion

Question			Max mark	Marking instructions for this question
1.			30	<p>Knowledge and Understanding may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improbability of God • Incoherence of the God of classical theism • other atheist arguments • Philosophical responses • Scientific responses • Religious responses • Relevant sources <p>Analysis may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implications of arguments from the improbability of God • consequences of arguments from the improbability of God • connections between the different arguments for atheism and responses • explanations of sources <p>Evaluation may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • counter-arguments • judgements • conclusions throughout

Question			Max mark	Marking instructions for this question
2.			30	<p>Knowledge and Understanding may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aquinas: argument from motion, contingency, causation • other cosmological arguments • philosophical responses • scientific responses • religious response <p>Analysis may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implications of arguments from Aquinas's arguments • consequences of arguments from Aquinas's arguments • connections between the different arguments • explanations of sources <p>Evaluation may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • counter-arguments • judgements • conclusions throughout

Question			Max mark	Marking instructions for this question
3.	(a)		5	The teleological argument is an attempt to prove the existence of God through design and purpose. St. Thomas Aquinas' Fifth Way is that as there is order to natural processes and design in the universe, then the implication is that a great designer exists. He uses the analogy of the archer to show that there must be a designer (God) behind it all as an arrow which lacks intelligence cannot hit a target or end goal without something intelligent guiding it. William Paley uses the analogies of the watch and the eye to argue that as they appear to be designed as they have a purpose then they must have had a designer. His argument is that as the universe shows evidence of design, complexity and purpose then there must have been a designer, and the designer must then be God.
	(b)		5	<p>The wording 'but the design argument still lives' implies that the author believes the argument has been unfairly rejected and there is still merit in the argument. He highlights that whilst many believe evolution adequately explains how life came about, he believes that given how 'precise' the conditions needed to be for life to come about, it is simply not an adequate explanation. By using the term 'highly improbable', we can infer that he is very sceptical and thinks that it is very unlikely for this chance process to really explain everything that we see today.</p> <p>The author maintains that given there is another option – that of a designer – it is more reasonable to go with this idea. He implies that an intelligent designer or creator is a more reasonable explanation for the fine-tuned nature of the universe, particularly as it relates to the emergence of life through evolution.</p>
	(c)		5	I disagree with this quote as it suggests the existence of a designer or creator God as an explanation for the fine-tuning of the universe. This assumption is a weakness from a scientific perspective because it introduces a theological or philosophical concept without empirical evidence. It lacks quantitative measures and the use of tried and tested scientific experiments. As a result, I feel that the quote does not provide solid scientific evidence or data to support the claim that the precise structure of natural laws and constants is highly improbable without a designer. I am not convinced by this quote because it uses the term 'highly improbable', which can be subjective and open to interpretation, what one person considers highly improbable; another may view differently. Finally, the quote, while asserting that the existence of a designer or creator God makes the fine-tuning of the universe less improbable, does not offer a detailed or substantive explanation of how this designer or creator operates. It leaves a significant gap in understanding the nature, attributes, and mechanisms of this supposed intelligent designer.

Section 2

Part A – Religious Experience

Question			Max mark	Marking instructions for this question
4.			30	<p>Knowledge and Understanding may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• examples of sociological accounts of religious experience• examples of religious experiences and/or other accounts• relevant sources <p>Analysis may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• implications of alternative accounts of religious experience• consequences of alternative accounts of religious experience• connections between other alternative accounts of religious experience and faith perspectives• explanations of relevant sources <p>Evaluation may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• counter-arguments• judgements• conclusions throughout• overall conclusions

Question			Max mark	Marking instructions for this question
5.			30	<p>Knowledge and Understanding may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • categories of religious experiences • accounts such as James, Swinburne, Otto • examples of meditative religious experiences • examples of alternative religious experiences and/or other accounts • relevant sources <p>Analysis may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implications of accounts of religious experience • consequences of accounts of religious experience • connections between other of religious experience and faith perspectives • explanations of relevant sources <p>Evaluation may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • counter-arguments • judgements • conclusions throughout • overall conclusions

Question			Max mark	Marking instructions for this question
6.	(a)		5	<p>Candidates will be awarded 1 mark per point.</p> <p>James' idea of religious experience was that they are real as they have real effects and so they could be studied. He created four categories of religious experiences. Passive experiences are external and not induced – they happened to you from some other power. Noetic experiences give you some form of spiritual insight. Transient experiences are sometimes fleeting and pass very quickly, whereas ineffable means they are beyond words and beyond description.</p>
	(b)		5	<p>Award 1 mark per point.</p> <p>An implication of the statement, 'Religious experiences are real' is that it gives weight to the argument that religious experience can be studied. The statement, 'just like any other feelings we have' implies that the author seems to equate religious experiences with feelings, and as a consequence this supports the argument that they should be taken seriously. 'We can study them like we study our thoughts and emotions' implies that religious experiences can be studied just like psychology, which is an established field. 'It's kind of like looking at what goes on in their minds beneath the surface' if can you look at what goes on in the mind a potential implication is that religious experience is created by the subconscious mind. 'Like from a dream' implies that religious experiences are beyond our control, this is supported by James' other categorisation of it being a passive experience.</p>
	(c)		5	<p>Award 1 mark per point.</p> <p>I agree with James to the extent that I think religious experiences are real as they have a real impact on those who experience them. However, I disagree with the source for although I agree that religious experiences are linked to feelings, I don't think they're just like any other feelings. This is a weak analogy as experiences are not the same as feelings, though often experiences can cause feelings. I agree we can study religious experiences as many have common aspects but I disagree with James as many experiences are noetic as they were triggered by an external 'other' rather than an internal cause and so not by 'feelings'. I also disagree with the source as their argument is weakened by the focus on subconscious and dreams as both have been shown to have had dubious studies and beliefs associated with them so to use this as a comparison weakens the source's claimed that religious experiences are real. Finally, I think comparing religious experiences to dreams is problematic as I agree with philosophers such as Descartes who argued that we can rationalise that a dream is not 'real' in the same sense as being awake and so this source completely undermines the argument that religious experiences can be studied scientifically or empirically.</p>

Section 2

Part B – Medical Ethics

Question			Max mark	Marking instructions for this question
7.			30	<p>Knowledge and Understanding may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• organ allocation• organ procurement• moral issues surrounding organ allocation• religious/non-religious responses• relevant sources <p>Analysis may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• implications of religious/non-religious responses to organ allocation• consequences of religious/non-religious responses to organ allocations• connections between identified issues and organ allocation• explanations of sources <p>Evaluation may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• counter-arguments• judgements• conclusions throughout• overall conclusions

Question			Max mark	Marking instructions for this question
8.			30	<p>Knowledge and Understanding may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assisted dying • sanctity of life • end of life care • moral issues surrounding assisted dying • religious/non-religious responses • relevant sources <p>Analysis may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implications of religious/non-religious responses to assisted dying • consequences of religious/non-religious responses to assisted dying • connections between identified issues and assisted dying • explanations of sources <p>Evaluation may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • counter-arguments • judgements • conclusions throughout • overall conclusions

Question			Max mark	Marking instructions for this question
9.	(a)		5	<p>Candidates will be awarded 1 mark per point.</p> <p>Possible Response Abortion is the deliberate termination of a pregnancy by artificial means. This is where the pregnancy is ended either by taking medicines or having a surgical procedure. Medical abortion involves taking two pills – mifepristone to prepare the body and then misoprostol a few days later. There are two types of surgical abortion – vacuum aspiration can be used in the first 14 weeks of pregnancy and beyond that, dilation and evacuation. The Abortion Act 1967 legalised abortion in the UK provided specific criteria is met.</p>
	(b)		5	<p>Award 1 mark per point.</p> <p>Possible response By using the term ‘large sacrifices’ to refer to pregnancy, the author is making the point that pregnancy has a significant impact on the mother. But she makes the point that this is not just from a health perspective, but that pregnancy means setting aside personal desires for the sake of maintaining another life. By maintaining that an individual isn’t obligated to make sacrifices for a sake of another it implies that she is a proponent of libertarian ethics. By using the term ‘alive’ to refer to a foetus, the author is showing that she would consider that some form of life has begun. But that she also believes that the foetus’ right to life, does not outweigh the mother’s right to liberty and autonomy.</p>
	(c)		5	<p>Award 1 mark per point.</p> <p>Possible response I agree with the author because whilst pregnancy is only for 42 weeks it still physically effects women beyond this point in terms of mental and physical health. In the UK, except in case of disability, abortion is only allowed for the first 24 weeks of pregnancy and at this point the foetus doesn’t even have self-awareness – so it is illogical to say that it’s interests should be placed above the mothers. I think every woman should have the right to control what happens to her own body and to dictate otherwise would be immoral. On the other hand, I disagree because whilst autonomy is important you also shouldn’t actively harm other people – and abortion is choosing to deliberately end a life. I think asking someone to make sacrifices for 9 months is far less immoral than actively ending a life.</p>

[END OF MARKING INSTRUCTIONS]