

Cambridge International AS & A Level

BIBLICAL STUDIES**9484/42**

Paper 4 Christian Understandings of God, Life and the Universe

May/June 2026

MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 50

Published

This mark scheme contains the instructions and marking guidance that our examiners used to mark candidate responses for this component.

Before they start marking, examiners complete a standardisation process. They review a range of candidate responses and discuss the mark scheme in detail to agree which answers can and cannot be accepted. Examiners award marks where it is clear that candidate responses have met the requirements of the mark scheme. These requirements may vary between different components or different versions of the same component, depending on the exact requirements of the question and the candidate responses seen during the standardisation process.

Sometimes, our mark schemes may allow marks to be awarded to responses which contain elements that are factually incorrect or for content not covered by the syllabus. We do this in response to the demands of a specific question to support candidates and make sure that our assessments are fair. However, these allowances should not be used as a guide for teaching and learning.

We cannot discuss the mark scheme with schools, and we recommend that schools read the mark scheme together with the assessment material and the Principal Examiner Report for Teachers.

This document consists of **8** printed pages.

General marking principles

All examiners must apply these marking principles when marking candidate responses.

1	Examiners must award marks for each response in line with: - the specific content defined in the mark scheme - the specific skills defined in the mark scheme or in the level descriptions - the standard of response required as exemplified by the standardisation scripts.
2	Examiners must award whole marks (not half marks, or other fractions).
3	Examiners must award marks positively . This means that: - marks are not deducted for errors or omissions - marks are awarded for correct/valid answers as defined in the mark scheme and also for other valid answers which go beyond the scope of the syllabus and mark scheme referring to your team leader as appropriate - the quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar are judged only when the mark scheme indicates that these features are specifically assessed in the question. However, the meaning of all responses must be unambiguous.
4	Examiners must consistently apply the requirements of the mark scheme and any rules for what to do when candidates have not followed instructions correctly.
5	Examiners must use the full range of marks defined in the mark scheme, unless limited by the quality of the candidate responses seen.
6	Examiners must award marks according to the mark scheme and must not award marks with grade thresholds or grade descriptions in mind.

Annotations guidance for centres

Examiners use a system of annotations as a shorthand for communicating their marking decisions to one another. Examiners are trained during the standardisation process on how and when to use annotations. The purpose of annotations is to inform the standardisation and monitoring processes and guide the supervising examiners when they are checking the work of examiners within their team. The meaning of annotations and how they are used is specific to each component and is understood by all examiners who mark the component.

We publish annotations in our mark schemes to help centres understand the annotations they may see on copies of scripts. Note that there may not be a direct correlation between the number of annotations on a script and the mark awarded. Similarly, the use of an annotation may not be an indication of the quality of the response.

The annotations listed below were available to examiners marking this component in this series.

Annotations

Annotation	Meaning
Highlighter	Highlighting areas of text
Off-page comment	Allows comments to be entered at the bottom of the RM marking window and then displayed when the associated question item is navigated to.
	Indicates that the point has been noted, but no credit has been given.

Table A: AO1 Knowledge and understanding (10 marks)Use this table to give marks for each candidate response for **Questions 1, 2 and 3.**

Level	Description	Marks
Level 4	Detailed accurate knowledge with good understanding • Uses a range of detailed, accurate and relevant knowledge. • Demonstrates understanding through a well-developed response. • Fully addresses the question. • Good understanding of the context, if relevant.	9–10
Level 3	Mostly accurate knowledge with some understanding • Uses a range of mostly accurate and relevant knowledge. • Demonstrates understanding through a developed response. • Addresses most aspects of the question. • Some engagement with the context, if relevant.	6–8
Level 2	Partially accurate knowledge with limited understanding • Uses a range of knowledge which may be partially accurate. • Demonstrates limited understanding through a partially developed response. • Attempts to address the question. • Attempts to engage with the context, if relevant.	3–5
Level 1	Limited knowledge and basic understanding • Identifies a limited range of knowledge which may not be accurate. • Demonstrates basic understanding through a limited response. • Response is relevant to the topic, but does not directly address the question. • Little or no reference to the context, if relevant.	1–2
Level 0	No relevant material to credit.	0

Table B: AO2 Analysis and evaluation (15 marks)Use this table to give marks for each candidate response for **Questions 1, 2 and 3.**

Level	Description	Marks
Level 5	Effective conclusion with analysis of points of view - Analyses the importance and/or strength of different points of view in detail. - Uses accurate evidence to support a sustained and well-structured discussion. - Effective conclusion to the question which evaluates knowledge and points of view.	13–15
Level 4	Coherent conclusion supported by evidenced points of view - Discusses different points of view in some detail. - Uses accurate evidence to support a well-structured discussion. - Coherent conclusion to the question which evaluates knowledge and points of view.	10–12
Level 3	Satisfactory conclusion with different points of view - Recognises different points of view and discusses at least one in some detail. - Uses accurate evidence to support discussion. - Satisfactory conclusion to the question which is linked to a range of knowledge and points of view.	7–9
Level 2	Basic conclusion with a supported point of view - Discusses one point of view. - Uses supporting evidence for one or more relevant points. The support may not be wholly relevant or accurate. - Attempted conclusion to the question which is linked to knowledge and/or a point of view.	4–6
Level 1	Limited interpretation with a point of view - States a point of view. - Little or no supporting evidence. - Attempted interpretation which may not directly address the question.	1–3
Level 0	No relevant material to credit.	0

Question	Answer	Marks
1	Compare the idea of God creating from nothing (<i>ex nihilo</i>) with the idea of God as craftsman. Use Table A: AO1 knowledge and understanding (10 marks) and Table B: AO2 Analysis and evaluation (15 marks) to mark candidate responses to this question. Award up to 10 marks AO1 Knowledge and understanding Award up to 15 marks AO2 Analysis and evaluation Indicative content Candidates may propose, analyse and evaluate some of the following arguments, all relevant arguments must be credited. • Candidates may explore the Genesis 1 creation story where God is shown to be speaking each element of his creation into existence and suggest that this supports the idea of creation <i>ex nihilo</i>. • Candidates may compare this to the portrayal of God as craftsman which can be exemplified through the creation of the first humans as seen in Genesis 2. • The idea of creation from nothing may show a greater emphasis on God's omnipotence whereas the imagery of God as craftsman brings the omnibenevolence of God into focus a little more; the idea of craftsman conveys a sense of deep care and involvement with creation in a way that the idea of creating from nothing may not. • Some candidates may note that the idea of creating from nothing may be debateable when looking at the Genesis 1 text as verse 2 could imply pre-existing material. • The belief in God creating from nothing may have less clear biblical support than the idea of God as craftsman. Creation <i>ex nihilo</i> is not really found in early Jewish and Christian thought. • Candidates may argue that the two portrayals are not incompatible. Even if God is a craftsman, the question of where the original material came from still remains. Material may be brought into existence from nothing and would then have to be crafted into shape at a later stage by God. • Candidates may use the prologue of John's Gospel, which draws on both the Genesis 1 account and Greek Philosophy, noting that the Word (<i>logos</i>) creating all things could be a reference to creation from nothing. • Candidates may use other texts such as Psalm 104 and Acts 17:22-28 to make valid points regarding each of these images of God as creator. • The creation narratives can be interpreted in a variety of ways and candidates may suggest that ideas about God as creator, particularly the imagery of God as craftsman, may not be intended to be understood literally and as such comparisons may not be beneficial.	25

Question	Answer	Marks
2	Assess the biblical evidence for belief in the resurrection of the body. Use Table A: AO1 knowledge and understanding (10 marks) and Table B: AO2 Analysis and evaluation (15 marks) to mark candidate responses to this question. Award up to 10 marks AO1 Knowledge and understanding Award up to 15 marks AO2 Analysis and evaluation Indicative content Candidates may propose, analyse and evaluate some of the following arguments, all relevant arguments must be credited. • Candidates may note that the idea of resurrection of the body is held to be a key component of the Christian faith. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul links belief in bodily resurrection with the resurrection of Jesus; just as a Christian is required to believe in the resurrection of Jesus, so they should believe in bodily resurrection after death. • The body that is raised may be different from the believer's earthly body. Paul uses the metaphor of a seed to illustrate this. Similarly, Jesus' resurrection body seemed to have different powers from those that he possessed before death. He appears and disappears suddenly yet there is still some bodily continuity as he carries the wounds of his crucifixion and eats. • Some candidates may argue that 1 Thessalonians 4 which refers to the dead as asleep and waiting to be brought to life again provides evidence for the resurrection. • Candidates may also note that in 1 Corinthians 15, and elsewhere in the New Testament, there seems to be the suggestion that early Christians were baptised for the dead as part of their belief that there was a bodily resurrection. • Some candidates may argue that the Bible is more concerned about salvation of the soul rather than the body; the imagery in 2 Corinthians 5 of a tent or house which is stripped away to reveal a person's essence could be taken as suggesting the importance of the soul. • Some candidates may note that the resurrection of the body implies that this is an event that will happen at the end of all things and that this appears to contradict Jesus' words to the thief on the cross that he would go to paradise today. • The biblical description of hell, particularly in some of the parables of Jesus and in the book of Revelation, as a fiery physical place makes more sense if the resurrection and afterlife are physical; it is difficult to conceive of how burning might affect a disembodied soul. • Candidates may argue that the resurrection of the body is a more authentic biblical belief than the idea that only the soul survives; the emphasis on body-soul dualism may be the result of later philosophy rather than biblical evidence.	25

Question	Answer	Marks
3	‘J L Mackie’s inconsistent triad presents a significant challenge to belief in the Christian God.’ Discuss. Use Table A: AO1 knowledge and understanding (10 marks) and Table B: AO2 Analysis and evaluation (15 marks) to mark candidate responses to this question. Award up to 10 marks AO1 Knowledge and understanding Award up to 15 marks AO2 Analysis and evaluation Indicative content Candidates may propose, analyse and evaluate some of the following arguments, all relevant arguments must be credited. • Candidates may argue that J L Mackie’s presentation of the problem of evil does show the logical incompatibility of the divine attributes with the existence of evil in the world. • The inconsistent triad references the existence of evil alongside omnipotence and omnibenevolence. The discussion may also be extended to omniscience; Mackie also suggests that omniscience adds to the problem of evil as God knows what humans will do with their free will. • Candidates may note that Mackie’s challenge is a challenge to ‘the Christian God’, and that if a Christian is willing to sacrifice or redefine one of the attributes of God in some way, then the challenge is significantly weakened. • Candidates may argue that the Augustinian theodicy which involves ideas of free will, the fall and original sin weaken Mackie’s challenge as it shows that the existence of evil is largely down to the actions of human beings. • Augustinian theodicies have been criticised on the grounds that they seem to require a literal belief in the creation story and suggest that sin is transmitted biologically at the moment of conception. • Candidates may use Irenaean-type theodicies to suggest that God allows evil and suffering in the world in order to provide an opportunity for character development that would otherwise not be possible. • Irenaean-type theodicies have been criticised on the grounds that this requires an all-good God to use evil as a tool to bring about a greater good (D Z Phillips). • Candidates may draw a distinction between moral evil, caused by human beings, and natural evil, caused by the physical laws of the world. They may argue that the theodicies are more or less successful with regard to one of these rather than the other. • Candidates may use biblical material to support or oppose the statement in the question. Job’s unjust suffering could have been prevented by an omnipotent, omnibenevolent God. There are passages in the Bible, such as the book of Romans, which make the link between sin and evil as well as those that reference character building.	25