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Rugby School 16+ Religious Studies

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RUGBY SCHOOL

Sixth Form Entrance Examination

Religious Studies (Philosophy and Theology)

Time allowed: 1 hour

Instructions to candidates: Answer all questions.

Equipment Required: **Pen**

There are **32 marks** available in total.

Name: _____

Specimen paper

Paper Notes: 16+ Religious Studies Specimen Paper (16+ Religious Studies Specimen Paper)

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Overview

This is the **Sixth Form Entrance Examination in Religious Studies (Philosophy and Theology)**, published by **Rugby School** in Rugby. It is a specimen paper designed to give prospective candidates a clear sense of the knowledge, analytical skills, and evaluative reasoning expected of students applying to study Religious Studies at **Year 12** level. The paper carries **32 marks in total** and must be completed in **one hour**.

The examination is structured around **five questions** of escalating difficulty and mark value. Questions begin with brief recall tasks and progress through explanation, examination with scriptural reference, comparison and contrast of viewpoints, and ultimately a sustained evaluative essay that demands balanced argument and a justified conclusion. Candidates are required to demonstrate familiarity with religious beliefs, practices, and sacred texts, as well as the ability to articulate philosophical positions and theological interpretations.

This paper is particularly well-suited for students nearing the end of Year 11 who wish to prepare for Rugby School's Sixth Form entry process, or for those seeking a rigorous introduction to A-level-standard Religious Studies. The emphasis on extended writing, critical evaluation, and explicit reference to scripture reflects the academic depth expected in Sixth Form religious and philosophical study.

How this paper is organised

The paper comprises **five questions** worth a combined **32 marks**, to be answered within a **one-hour time limit**. The mark allocation increases with question number: question 1 is worth **2 marks**, question 2 carries **4 marks**, question 3 is allocated **6 marks**, question 4 receives **8 marks**, and question 5, the extended evaluative essay, is worth **12 marks**.

Each question is accompanied by generous lined space for written responses. The first two questions require concise, factual answers about worship and places of worship. Question 3 introduces a requirement to **refer to sacred scripture**, testing both theological knowledge and the ability to connect belief to textual authority. Question 4 calls for a comparison and contrast of attitudes towards the origin of the universe, demanding structured analytical prose.

Question 5 is the most substantial task: an essay response to the statement 'All religious festivals are of equal importance'. Candidates must present **reasoned arguments for and against** the claim, refer explicitly to religion, and reach a **justified conclusion**. This question alone accounts for more than a third of the available marks and will occupy the majority of the candidate's time.

Topics covered

- Religious beliefs about worship: purposes, forms, and theological significance across traditions
- Places of worship: architectural symbolism, sacred space, and the role of communal and private worship settings
- The afterlife: doctrines of heaven, hell, resurrection, reincarnation, and their influence on moral behaviour and devotional practice, with reference to sacred scripture
- Cosmology and the origin of the universe: contrasting religious creation narratives (e.g. Genesis, Big Bang theology) with secular scientific models
- Evaluative reasoning about religious festivals: hierarchies of importance, liturgical calendars, and the theological or cultural weight of major observances
- Use of sacred scripture as evidence: quoting, paraphrasing, and interpreting authoritative texts to support theological claims
- Constructing balanced arguments: presenting multiple perspectives on a philosophical or theological claim and synthesising them into a justified conclusion
- Extended essay technique in Religious Studies: structuring evaluative prose, signposting arguments, and integrating religious vocabulary with philosophical analysis

How to use this paper for revision

- Review key beliefs and practices from at least two major world religions (Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism) so you can draw on contrasting examples for questions 1 and 2.
- Memorise a handful of short, relevant scriptural quotations on the afterlife (e.g. 1 Corinthians 15:42, Qur'an 23:99-100, Bhagavad Gita 2:22) that you can integrate into question 3 without hesitation.
- Practise comparing religious and scientific viewpoints on cosmology by preparing a clear explanation of the Big Bang alongside at least one creation account (Genesis, Qur'anic creation, Hindu cosmology).
- For the essay question, plan a four-paragraph structure: introduction, arguments for the statement, arguments against, and a conclusion that weighs the evidence and states your reasoned judgement.
- Time yourself strictly: aim to complete questions 1 to 4 in the first 30 minutes, leaving a full 30 minutes for the extended essay in question 5.
- Use religious vocabulary accurately (e.g. transcendence, immanence, eschatology, theodicy, exegesis) to demonstrate subject knowledge and analytical precision.
- Read the question wording carefully; 'examine' means explore and explain, 'compare and contrast' requires you to identify both similarities and differences, and 'evaluate' demands a judgement backed by reasoning.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Writing vague or overly general answers in questions 1 and 2 (e.g. 'worship is important') instead of naming specific beliefs or practices that would earn marks.
- Failing to include scriptural references in question 3, or quoting scripture without explaining its relevance to the influence of afterlife beliefs on behaviour.
- Presenting only one viewpoint in question 4 instead of genuinely comparing and contrasting two distinct attitudes towards the universe's origin.
- Writing a one-sided essay in question 5 that only argues for or against the statement, rather than presenting balanced reasoning and a justified conclusion.
- Running out of time for question 5 because too long was spent on earlier questions; the essay is worth 12 marks and needs proportionate attention.
- Using informal or conversational language instead of the formal, analytical register appropriate to Sixth Form Religious Studies writing.

Exam technique

Begin by reading all five questions carefully and noting the mark allocations. Allocate roughly **one minute per mark** as a baseline: questions 1 and 2 should take around 6 minutes combined, question 3 about 6 minutes, question 4 about 8 minutes, and question 5 a full **12 minutes** or more. If you finish the shorter questions quickly, carry the saved time forward to the essay.

For questions 1 to 4, write clearly and concisely. In question 1, two distinct beliefs about worship (e.g. corporate worship as obedience to divine command; personal prayer as a means of communion with God) will secure the marks. In question 2, **explain** means give reasons or elaborate on significance, not simply list facts. Question 3 requires you to **name and quote** scripture, then explain how that text shapes a believer's actions or attitudes. Question 4 calls for a structured comparison: identify one religious and one secular (or two contrasting religious) viewpoints, outline their core claims, and note where they converge or diverge.

Question 5 is the centrepiece. Spend a minute planning: jot down two or three arguments supporting the statement, two or three opposing, and a tentative conclusion. Write an introduction that defines key terms (what counts as 'importance?') and signals your approach. Develop each side in separate paragraphs, using **specific examples of festivals** (e.g. Easter vs. Pentecost, Eid al-Fitr vs. Ashura) and theological reasoning. Conclude by weighing the arguments and stating your reasoned judgement clearly. Aim for balanced, mature prose that demonstrates intellectual engagement rather than personal opinion.

What to revise alongside this paper

Students preparing for this paper should revise core doctrines and practices from at least two major world religions, particularly beliefs about God, worship, sacred texts, and the afterlife. Familiarity with key scriptural passages (Christian New Testament, Qur'an, Hebrew Bible, Bhagavad Gita, Guru Granth Sahib) is essential, as is the ability to summarise and apply them in written argument.

Philosophical themes such as the relationship between faith and reason, arguments for the existence of God (cosmological, teleological, ontological), and the problem of evil will enrich your answers, especially in questions requiring comparison or evaluation. Background reading on the historical development of religious festivals and their theological significance (e.g. why Easter is central to Christianity, the role of Ramadan in Islam) will strengthen your essay in question 5.

Beyond this paper, students should practise extended essay writing, focusing on balanced argument, clear paragraph structure, and the integration of evidence.

Engaging with A-level Religious Studies textbooks, past papers, and specimen material from exam boards such as AQA, OCR, or Edexcel will provide valuable additional practice in the analytical and evaluative skills this Rugby School entrance examination demands.

Key terms

Worship, Places of worship, Afterlife, Sacred scripture, Resurrection, Eschatology, Cosmology, Creation narratives, Religious festivals, Liturgical calendar, Theodicy, Transcendence, Immanence, Evaluative reasoning, Justified conclusion

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Sixth Form Specimen Examination Mark Scheme Religious Studies (Philosophy & Theology)

2 mark question – give/state

One mark given per correct piece of information given. Two marks available as it asks for two pieces of information to be given. These can be one-word answers or short sentences.

Examples of accepted answers: can be done in a church/at home/sing hymns/prayer beads/liturgical/non liturgical/5 times a day for Muslims/pillar of Islam/set prayers/informal prayers

Any other relevant answer must be credited.

4 mark question – explain

One mark given for belief stated and then another mark given for an explanation of the belief. The question asks for two beliefs so this must be repeated to gain the full marks. Any religion can be referred to.

Example:

One religious belief about Places of Worship is that Christians attend a Church. They worship at a Church, usually on a Sunday, through celebration of the Eucharist or singing hymns.

Muslims worship in a Mosque. One of the Five Pillars of Islam (salat) instructs Muslims to pray five times a day and this can be done in a Mosque.

6 mark question – influence

Criteria	Mark
No relevant content given.	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic, undeveloped beliefs have been given but it has not been explained how these influence a believer • No attempt has been made to refer to sacred scripture 	1-2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear and accurate beliefs have been made and the answer has attempted to explain how these may influence a believer • Vague reference to sacred scripture given 	3-4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed and specific beliefs about the afterlife have been given in the context of how these beliefs may influence a believer • Clear and accurate reference to sacred scripture given 	5-6

8 mark question – compare/contrast

Criteria	Mark
No relevant content given	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic understanding of the topic given • Answer may be unclear and lacking in detail • The candidate has stated information/facts about the afterlife rather than comparing and contrasting information 	1-2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound understanding of the topic given and the candidate is beginning to refer to specific religious/atheist/ethical/philosophical teaching or ideas • Answer may be general with some detail but depth and breadth is lacking • An attempt has been made to compare and contrast 	3-4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good understanding of the topic given with clear references to specific religious/atheist/ethical/philosophical teaching and ideas • Answers are more specific with some depth and breadth of knowledge shown • Students have successfully compared and contrasted religious belief showing ways in which different beliefs are similar and ways in which they are different 	5-6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidates have shown comprehensive understanding that includes specific and accurate references to particulars of religious/atheist/ ethical/ philosophical teaching and ideas • Answer shows depth and breadth of knowledge in thorough detail • The student has compared and contrasted confidently, choosing the most relevant information to be given. They have identified ways these beliefs are similar and ways they are different. 	7-8

12 mark question – Evaluate

Criteria	Mark
Nothing worthy of credit.	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point of view with reason(s) stated in support 	1-3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasoned consideration of a point of view. • A logical chain of reasoning drawing on knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information. <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of different points of view, each supported by relevant reasons/evidence. • Maximum of Level 2 if there is no reference to religion. 	4-6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasoned consideration of different points of view. • Logical chains of reasoning that draw on knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information. 	7-9

Clear reference to religion.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A well-argued response, reasoned consideration of different points of view.• Logical chains of reasoning leading to judgement(s) supported by knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information.• References to religion applied to the issue.	10-12

Paper Notes: 16+ Religious Studies Mark Scheme (16+ Religious Studies Mark Scheme)

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Overview

This mark scheme sets out clear assessment criteria for five question types (2, 4, 6, 8 and 12 marks), but it does not provide specific answers to individual questions. When marking your work, apply each rubric carefully: notice whether an answer meets all the descriptors in a band or only some of them. A common error is to assume that length equals quality; the 12-mark rubric, for instance, rewards logical chains of reasoning and references to religion applied to the issue, not simply word count.

Because the mark scheme is generic and example-based rather than answer-by-answer, you will need to use your judgement when awarding marks. Compare your own response against the criteria honestly, and be alert to the difference between a response that states a point and one that develops it with evidence. If you are uncertain about a particular answer, revisit the question paper to check whether the task required comparison, evaluation or simple recall.

The worked examples below illustrate how to apply each rubric to common question styles. Use them to calibrate your marking, especially if you are practising under timed conditions and want to understand what examiners reward.

How this paper is organised

(empty)

Topics covered

(none)

How to use this paper for revision

(none)

Common mistakes to avoid

(none)

Exam technique

(empty)

What to revise alongside this paper

(empty)

Key terms

(none)

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