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A-level Religious Studies

OCR H573 · all three papers Sample factfile

How to Write a 40-Mark Essay

IN A NUTSHELL **Every question in OCR A-level Religious Studies is a 40-mark essay: answer three of four in 2 hours. Here is how the marks work and how to build a top-level answer.**

1 The marks

AO1 · 16
knowledge and understanding

AO2 · 24
analysis and evaluation

40 min
per essay

3 of 4
essays per paper

2 Command words

- Critically assess: weigh strengths and weaknesses; judge how successful.
- Critically compare: similarities and differences, judged throughout.
- "Statement." Discuss: argue for and against; decide how far you agree.
- Evaluate / To what extent: how far is it true, and why?

3 Plan in five minutes

- Underline the key word: "successfully", "convincing", "compare".
- Write a one-sentence line of argument.
- Choose three points, each with a counter-argument.
- Decide your conclusion before you start writing.

4 Inside each paragraph

- Point that answers the question.
- Explain with a reference or scholar (AO1).
- Counter-argument, weighed: is it fatal? (AO2)
- A judgement linking back to the question.

5 What stops top marks

- Description with evaluation only at the end.
- "Some people disagree" without saying who or why.
- Answering a different question from the one set.

6 Exam tip

Aim for 900 to 1,200 focused words. A clear argument that judges throughout beats a longer essay that lists everything you know.

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