

## Key skills

### Knowledge involves:

*Selection of a range of (thorough) accurate and relevant information that is directly related to the specific demands of the question.*

This means you choose the correct information relevant to the question set NOT the topic area. You will have to think and focus on selecting key information and NOT writing everything you know about the topic area.

### Understanding involves:

*Explanation that is extensive, demonstrating depth and/or breadth with excellent use of evidence and examples including (where appropriate) thorough and accurate supporting use of sacred texts, sources of wisdom and specialist language.*

This means that you demonstrate that you understand something by being able to illustrate and expand your points through examples/supporting evidence in a personal way and NOT repeat chunks from a text book (known as rote learning).

### Further application of skills:

Go through the topic areas in this section and create some bullet lists of key points from key areas. For each one, provide further elaboration and explanation through the use of evidence and examples.

## Study tip

One of the most common errors made in examinations is by candidates who see a key word in a title of an essay and write everything they know about it. Successful candidates avoid this and only use the information that is directly relevant to the question.

## AO1 Developing skills

It is now time to reflect upon the information that has been covered so far. It is also important to consider how what you have learned can be focused and used for examination-style answers by practising the skills associated with AO1.

Assessment objective 1 (AO1) involves demonstrating knowledge and understanding. The terms 'knowledge' and 'understanding' are obvious but it is crucial to be familiar with how certain skills demonstrate these terms, and also, how the performance of these skills is measured (see generic band descriptors Band 5 for AS AO1).

Obviously, an answer is placed within an appropriate band descriptor depending upon how well the answer performs, ranging from excellent, good, satisfactory, basic/limited to very limited.

For starters, try using the framework / writing frame provided to help you in practising these skills to answer the question below.

As the units in each section of the book develop, the amount of support will be reduced gradually in order to encourage your independence and the perfecting of your AO1 skills.

## EXAM PRACTICE: A WRITING FRAME

### A focus on explaining how Aquinas demonstrates the need for a first cause of the universe.

Aquinas' first three of his Five Ways, form part of the cosmological argument for the existence of God.

The first of these ways was that of 'motion' or 'change' and is based on ...

Aquinas developed the ideas of Aristotle who spoke of ...

Aristotle's example to illustrate his ideas of potential moving to actual was ...

Aquinas used his own example which was ...

These ideas clearly show that the universe ...

The Second Way deals with the chain of cause and effect which can be observed ...

Aquinas stated that infinite regress was impossible because ...

An example to explain this further could be ...

Aquinas' Third Way dealt with ...

This was important because it shows ...

An example to illustrate this is ...

In summary ...

## Issues for analysis and evaluation

### Whether inductive arguments for God's existence are persuasive

One of the key strengths of inductive arguments lies in their ability in establishing probability – gathering evidence and suggesting the most likely conclusion based on this evidence. Evidence-based arguments are often more persuasive than arguments not based on evidence. Inductive arguments are *a posteriori* and synthetic (true in relation to how they relate to the world) as they depend on experience and/or evidence. This provides them with credibility and makes them more likely to be persuasive. Inductive arguments rely on experience that may be universal and testable – allowing it to be widely used. For many people this is extremely important as it makes the argument more understandable and accessible and, therefore, persuasive.

One of the key strengths is that the argument recognises there may be more than one correct answer – the evidence used can support more than one probable conclusion, which is particularly useful if an individual is not entirely certain what the conclusion should be. This means the argument can be persuasive precisely because it has flexibility. This also allows for the possibility of error that means changes can be made to elements of the reasoning without undermining the process (or conclusion) as a whole.

Furthermore, inductive arguments are the basis of the vast majority of scientifically accepted theories and these have a wide appeal in the 21st-century world, such that people readily accept such theories as valid precisely because of the inductive and evidence-based approaches that led to these theories being formed. This means that any philosophical or theological reasoning that mirrors the work of science must surely have a similar claim to both validity and persuasiveness – unlike any reasoning that has not been based on such foundations.

However, some may argue that they are not persuasive – often for the same reasons as others would claim them to be. For instance, one of the significant weaknesses of inductive arguments is that they can be accused of having limited effectiveness as 'undeniable proofs'. Their very flexibility means that they could be considered as weak arguments and, because of this, not persuasive.

It is also true to state that inductive arguments can be readily challenged if alternative evidence, that is equally as likely to be true, is provided – thereby undermining the persuasiveness of the argument. An extension to this is that it is also equally possible to accept all of the evidence but to deny the conclusion without contradiction. If this is accepted then it suggests that there can be no persuasiveness in the argument as this limits its effectiveness, particularly in terms of attempting to establish the existence of a divine being with specific characteristics (e.g. God of Classical Theism as the designer of the universe).

Perhaps most important to consider is that the premises, whilst supporting the conclusion, do not make it definite – for many, this means that inductive arguments are not persuasive enough to support a basis for religious belief.

This section covers AO2  
content and skills

### Specification content

Whether inductive arguments for  
God's existence are persuasive.

### AO2 Activity Possible lines of argument

Listed below are some conclusions that could be drawn from the AO2 reasoning in the accompanying text:

1. Inductive reasoning is the most useful form of reasoning when attempting to determine the existence of God.
2. Any form of argument based on empirical evidence is more likely to persuade people because it can be seen to make sense.
3. Any form of argument that cannot provide a definite conclusion is too flimsy to persuade anyone.
4. Flexibility in arguments demonstrates that they are responsive to criticism and therefore strong arguments; making them more persuasive.

Consider each of the conclusions drawn above and collect evidence and examples to support each argument from the AO1 and AO2 material studied in this section. Select one conclusion that you think is most convincing and explain why it is so. Now contrast this with the weakest conclusion in the list, justifying your argument with clear reasoning and evidence.