

AS and A level 2016 Religious Studies

Launch Event

Autumn 2015





Agenda

- Introducing our specification
- AS and A level reforms and new requirements
- Our specification
 - A-Level – Content and Assessment
 - AS Level – Content and Assessment
- Co-teachability
- Support and resources
- Next steps



Inspiring Great Teaching

- **Clear and coherent structure** – our qualification offers four areas of study, allowing students to choose the three they wish to study from Philosophy and Religion, Religion and Ethics, New Testament Studies and a study of a chosen religion which will all be assessed through three externally-examined papers.
- **Helps develop a holistic understanding of religion** – the specification facilitates enquiry into, and develops insightful evaluations of, ultimate questions about the purposes and commitments of human life, especially as expressed in philosophy, ethics and religion.
- **Clear and straightforward** question papers, mark schemes and assessment grids
- **Co-teachable:** We have designed our AS and A level qualification to allow them to be co-taught



The A Level Reforms

- All new AS and A levels will be assessed at the same standard as they are currently.
- All new AS and A levels will be fully linear.
- AS levels will be stand-alone qualifications.
- The content of the AS level can be a sub-set of the A level content to allow co-teachability, but marks achieved in the AS will not count towards the A level

Timeline



Spec	2015	2016	2017	2018
Current Specification	Summer series as normal	Summer series as normal	Final AS resit and A2 exams	
New 2016 Specification		First teaching (AS level and 2-year A level)	First AS examinations and first teaching (1-year A level)	First A level exams

- The last available assessment for the current AS and A levels will be June 2017
- The reformed AS first assessment is 2017 and A level is 2018



AS and A Level RS: Reform – Subject Content

Religious studies specifications at AS and A level must require students to demonstrate knowledge, understanding and skills through three of the following four approaches:

- Systematic Study of one religion
- Philosophy of Religion
- Religion and Ethics
- Textual Study



AS and A Level RS: Reform – Key changes

- Reduction in weighting of Philosophy of Religion
- Three approaches from four have to be studied, ensuring that all students will cover specific religious content
- A new requirement to compare of the writings of scholars has been added
- Connections need to be made between all approaches studied



AS and A Level RS: Assessment Objectives

	Objective	AS	A level
AO1	Demonstrate Knowledge and understanding of religion and belief including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching• influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies• Cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice• Approaches to the study of religion and belief	60%	50%
AO2	Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance and influence and study	40%	50%



Our research

- We have worked with the teaching community, higher education, learned societies and subject associations to design our new A Level Religious Studies specifications for 2016.
- Our ambition has been to develop Religious Studies qualifications that you will know and recognise, and to allow you to teach topics and religions you know your students will enjoy.
- We have commissioned and conducted our own research, including international benchmarking and trialing. This research will help us to build on the strengths of our current specification and to identify the skills students need to progress to further study in Religious Studies.

AS and A Level RS: Key features



- Students are encouraged to deal with controversial ideas about beliefs and values and to have the confidence in their ability to express their own beliefs and values supported by reasoned argument and evidence
- Focus on exploring common ground and controversy in dealing with issues that arise in morality and religion
- Focus on using the writings of key scholars to explore differing viewpoints about the development of ideas
- Develops transferable skills of informed discussion and engagement with a range of texts for progression to higher education



A Level

A Level Religious Studies: Overview



paper 1 Philosophy of Religion	paper 2 Religion and Ethics	paper 3 New Testament Studies	paper 4 Study of Religion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Philosophical issues - Nature & Influence of religious experience - Problem of evil and suffering - Language - Philosophers - Influences and developments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Significant concepts in issues and debates - Utilitarianism, situation ethics and natural moral law - War & Peace and Sexual Ethics - Ethical Language - Ethical Theory (including comparison of 2 scholars) - Medical ethics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contexts of the New Testament - Texts and Interpretation of the Person of Jesus - Interpreting the text and the purpose and authorship of the 4th Gospel - Ways of interpreting scripture - Texts and interpretation - Scientific and historical challenges in faith and history 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Religious beliefs, values and teachings - Sources of wisdom and authority - Practices that shape and express religious identity - Social and Historical developments - Comparative study of two scholars - Religion and Society (Set texts will be specified) Based in one of the following religions; Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Sikhism
2 hour exam 33.3% of Qual Students take 3 of the 4 papers	2 hour exam 33.3% of Qual Students take 3 of the 4 papers	2 hour exam 33.3% of Qual Students take 3 of the 4 papers	2 hour exam 33.3% of Qual Students take 3 of the 4 papers





Component one: Philosophy of Religion - content



- **Philosophical issues and questions:** Design, Cosmological and Ontological arguments
- **The nature and influence of religious experience:** Nature of Religious experience and its influence as an argument for the existence of God
- **Problems of evil and suffering:** Theodicies and solutions to the problem of suffering drawn from a range of religious traditions
- **Philosophical language:** Analogy and Symbol, Verification and falsification debates, Language games
- **Works of scholars:** Context to critiques of religious belief and points for discussion. A comparison of psychological (Freud) and sociological (Marx) critiques of religion.
- **Influences of developments in religious belief:** Views about life after death across a range of religious traditions. Religion and science debates and their significance for philosophy of religion.



Component two: Religion & Ethics - content

- **Significant concepts in issues or debates in religion and Ethics:** Environmental issues; Equality
- **A Study of Three Ethical Theories:** Utilitarianism; Situation Ethics; Natural Moral Law
- **Application of Ethical Theories to issues of importance:** War and Peace; Sexual Ethics
- **Ethical language:** Meta-ethics; the relationship between religion and morality
- **Deontology, virtual ethics and the works of scholars :** Kantian deontology; Aristotelian Virtue Ethics and a comparison of the works of Kant and Aristotle in relation to these two themes.
- **Medical ethics: beginning and end of life issues :** Medical ethics issues with a focus on the beginning and end of life debates.



Component three: New Testament Studies - content

- **Social, historical and religious context of the New Testament:** Prophecy regarding the Messiah; the world of the 1st century and the significance of this context on the life and work of Jesus.
- **Texts and Interpretation of the person of Jesus:** The prologue of John; Titles of Jesus in the synoptic gospels and in selected 'I am' sayings in John; miracles and signs
- **Interpreting the text and issues of relationship, purpose and authorship:** Interpreting the text; the synoptic problem, the purpose and authorship of the 4th Gospel
- **Ways of interpreting the scripture:** including the 4 main approaches to post-Enlightenment biblical interpretations and the context, strengths and weaknesses of these positions.
- **Text and interpretation:** Why did Jesus have to die?; The crucifixion and resurrection narratives in Luke's Gospels
- **Scientific and historical-critical challenges, ethical living and the works of Scholars** : Rudolph Bultmann and Frank Morison



Component four: Study of choice of 1 of of 6 Religions - Christianity

- **Religious beliefs, values and teachings:** The nature of God as personal and as creator; The Trinity; The nature of the Church.
- **Sources and wisdom of authority:** The Bible; the nature and role of Jesus
- **Practices that shape and express religious identity :** The diversity of practice in the Eucharist; the diversity of practice in creative expressions in religious identity
- **Social and historical developments:** Science; secularisation; New movements in theology
- **Works of Scholars:** Atonement theory; comparison of key ideas in the work of Karl Barth and John Hick
- **Religion and society:** Pluralism and diversity; Equality and discrimination – gender
- **Primary texts:** Study of key ideas from short extracts that relate to life, death and the afterlife



A Level – Assessment Overview

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- Each component is assessed via externally-assessed written examination comprising three sections.
- Students answer all questions in Section A and Section B, and choose one question in Section C.
- **Section A**
Three short, structured questions – 18 marks
- **Section B**
Two extended-response questions on an unseen passage.
- 32 marks
- **Section C**
A choice of two extended essay questions – 30 marks



A Level – Example Assessment – Paper 1 – Section A

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Section A:

1. Outline the use of experience in a design argument for the existence of God. (4)
2. Explain the ideas of miracles. (5)
3. Assess the significance of the key ideas associated with religious experience. (9)



Section B – Paper 1



A fine brash hypothesis may be killed by inches, the death by a thousand qualifications. It seems to people who are not religious as if there was no conceivable event the occurrence of which would be admitted by religious people to be a reason for conceding 'There wasn't a God after all.' Someone tells us that God loves us as a father loves his children. But then we see a child dying of inoperable cancer of the throat. His earthly father is driven frantic in his efforts to help, but his heavenly Father reveals no signs of concern. Some qualification is made – God's love is 'not merely human love'. But then we ask: Just what would have to happen to entitle us to say 'God does not exist'? A believer's statement has been so eroded that it is no longer an assertion at all.

(from: 'The Philosophy of Religion', Flew, A, Editor: Mitchell B, By permission of Oxford University Press)

4. Clarify the ideas illustrated in this passage about the problem of suffering. (12)
5. Analyse the implications for religious language from this passage. (20)



A Level – Example Assessment – Paper 1 – Section C



Section C:

6. Compare the weaknesses that Marx and Freud found in religious belief.

Evaluate the implications of this comparison for an understanding of religion and human nature.

(30)

OR

7. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of belief in immortality of the soul and resurrection.

Evaluate the implications of these strengths and weaknesses for an understanding of religion and human nature.

(30)



AS Level

AS Level Religious Studies: Overview



<p>paper 1</p> <p>Philosophy of Religion</p>	<p>paper 2</p> <p>Religion and Ethics</p>	<p>paper 3</p> <p>New Testament Studies</p>	<p>paper 4</p> <p>Study of Religion</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philosophical issues • Nature & Influence of religious experience • Problem of evil and suffering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant concepts in issues and debates • Utilitarianism, situation ethics and natural moral law • War & Peace and Sexual Ethics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context of the New Testament • Texts and Interpretation of the New Testament • Interpreting the text and the purpose and authorship of the 4th Gospel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious beliefs, values and teachings • Sources of wisdom and authority • Practices that shape and express religious identity <p>(Set texts will be specified) Based in one of the following religions; Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Sikhism</p>
<p>1 hour exam 33.3% of Qual</p> <p>Students take 3 of the 4 papers</p>	<p>1 hour exam 33.3% of Qual</p> <p>Students take 3 of the 4 papers</p>	<p>1 hour exam 33.3% of Qual</p> <p>Students take 3 of the 4 papers</p>	<p>1 hour exam 33.3% of Qual</p> <p>Students take 3 of the 4 papers</p>



Component one: Philosophy of Religion - content



- **Philosophical issues and questions:** Design, Cosmological and Ontological arguments
- **The nature and influence of religious experience:** Nature of Religious experience and its influence as an argument for the existence of God
- **Problems of evil and suffering:** Theodicies and solutions to the problem of suffering drawn from a range of religious traditions



Component two: Religion & Ethics - content



- **Significant concepts in issues or debates in religion and Ethics:** Environmental issues; Equality
- **A Study of Three Ethical Theories:** Utilitarianism; Situation Ethics; Natural Moral Law
- **Application of Ethical Theories to issues of importance:** War and Peace; Sexual Ethics



Component three: New Testament Studies - content

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- **Social, historical and religious context of the New Testament:** Prophecy regarding the Messiah; the world of the 1st century and the significance of this context on the life and work of Jesus.
- **Texts and Interpretation of the person of Jesus:** The prologue of John; Titles of Jesus in the synoptic gospels and in selected 'I am' sayings in John; miracles and signs
- **Interpreting the text and issues of relationship, purpose and authorship:** The synoptic problem; Interpreting the text; the purpose and authorship of the 4th Gospel



Component four: Study of 1 of a choice of 6 Religions - Christianity

- **Religious beliefs, values and teachings:** The nature of God as personal and as creator; The Trinity; The nature of the Church.
- **Sources and wisdom of authority:** The Bible; the nature and role of Jesus
- **Practices that shape and express religious identity** : The diversity of practice in the Eucharist; the diversity of practice in creative expressions in religious identity





AS Level – Assessment Overview



- Each component is assessed via externally-assessed written examination comprising three sections.
- Students answer all questions in Section A and choose one question in Section B.
- **Section A**
Four short, structured questions – 25 marks
- **Section B**
A choice of two, two part essay questions – 25 marks

AS Level – Example Assessment – Paper 1 – Section A



Section A:

1. Outline some of the key ideas of a cosmological argument for the existence of God **(3)**
2. Explain the ideas of analogy in a design argument for the existence of God. **(5)**
3. Examine some ideas about God in an ontological argument for the existence of God. **(8)**
4. Assess the strengths of the design argument for the existence of God. **(9)**



AS Level – Example Assessment – Paper 1 – Section B

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Section B:

5 (a) Explore the key concepts associated with religious experience. (9)

(b) Analyse the weaknesses of religious experience as an argument for the existence of God. (16)

OR

6. (a) Explore the distinction between moral and non-moral suffering and some implications for the problem of suffering. (9)

(b) Analyse the success of one solution to the problem of suffering. (16)

Co-teaching AS and A Level



We have designed the AS and A level qualifications, so they can be co-taught:

- The AS has the same number of unit choices as the A Level
- The first three content bullet points are the same for AS and for A Level
- The assessment follows a common pattern of short answer responses and essay questions



Support



- Getting started guides
- Course planners
- Schemes of work
- Mapping documents
- Exemplars
- Guidance documents

Contact Details



- Contact the Religious Studies team with any questions:
 - Email: TeachingReligiousStudies@pearson.com
 - Tel: 0844 463 2817
- webpage: www.edexcel.com/Religiousstudies
- Sign up for Religious Studies e-mails to get the latest news
- AS and A level Religious Studies are also being redeveloped for 2016



GCSE Religious Studies



- Redeveloped for first teaching September 2016 with first assessment summer 2018
- Specification A:
 - Study of two religions split 75/25
 - Primary religion is Christianity, Catholic Christianity or Islam
 - Choice of Philosophy and Ethics or Textual Study in primary religion
- Specification B:
 - Study of two religions split 50/50
 - Any combination of the two religions*
 - Choose two components from Ethics, Peace & Conflict or Philosophy

*The two religions can not be Christianity and Catholic Christianity



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Questions?