

# AS and A level Religious Studies

Exploring different religions and beliefs

Discover our qualifications



# Exploring different religions and beliefs

This brochure will provide an overview of the specifications for our **Edexcel AS and A level Religious Studies** qualifications. In here, we outline how our specifications will engage your students and enable them to confidently interpret, contextualise and analyse the expressions of religions and world views they encounter – and how we are supporting you every step of the way.

We provide:

- flexible study combinations of religions and topics .....**pages 3-5**
- opportunity to focus on philosophy and ethics topics .....**pages 3-5**
- clear and accessible assessments .....**page 6**
- co-teachable AS and A level courses .....**page 7**
- expert support and guidance .....**pages 8-9**

## Working with you

We've listened to feedback from the teaching community, subject associations and universities to make sure our Edexcel AS and A level Religious Studies specifications for 2016 have been shaped by you and reflect the demands of a truly modern and evolving religious studies environment.

### Next steps ...

Once you've read through this guide, turn to the **back page** for details of how to:

1. **Sign up to teach** our qualifications and get specification updates and free support.
2. **Sign up for one of our FREE Getting Ready To Teach events** to help you plan for September 2020 with confidence.



# Flexible study combinations of religions and topics

Our AS and A level Religious Studies specifications offer a wide choice of topics within the requirement for more religious content, allowing you to tailor the course content to your students' interests. Content is relevant to the real world and encourages students to develop an appreciation of religious thought and its contribution to individuals, communities and societies.

- We offer four areas of study, allowing you to choose the **three** you wish to teach from:
  - Philosophy of Religion
  - Religion and Ethics
  - New Testament Studies
  - Study of Religion.
- The fourth area of study offers additional choice with the chance to study **one** out of the following six religions: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism or Sikhism.

## Opportunity to focus on philosophy and ethics topics

Our specifications help to develop a holistic understanding of religion, facilitating enquiry into the purposes and commitments of human life, especially as expressed in philosophy, ethics and religion.

- Two individual papers covering familiar philosophy and ethics content ensure that you can adapt the course to include the topics which are currently popular with AS and A Level students.



# Qualifications at a glance

The four topics are the same at AS and A level. The content of the AS level is a subset of the A level content. Centres co-teaching AS and A level can deliver the first three topics in each component in the first year, allowing students to be entered for the AS at the end of the year. Students are assessed through three externally-examined papers.

**AS level** – choice of **three** papers from the following four options

<p><b>Paper 1: Philosophy of Religion</b></p> <p>⚖️ 33.33%</p> <p>✓ 48 marks</p> <p>🕒 1hr</p>	<p><b>Paper 2: Religion and Ethics</b></p> <p>⚖️ 33.33%</p> <p>✓ 48 marks</p> <p>🕒 1hr</p>	<p><b>Paper 3: New Testament Studies</b></p> <p>⚖️ 33.33%</p> <p>✓ 48 marks</p> <p>🕒 1hr</p>	<p><b>Paper 4: Study of Religion</b></p> <p>⚖️ 33.33%</p> <p>✓ 54 marks</p> <p>🕒 1hr</p>
<p><b>Content overview</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Philosophical issues.</li> <li>• Nature and influence of religious experience.</li> <li>• Problems of evil and suffering.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Content overview</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant concepts in issues and debates.</li> <li>• Study of three ethical theories.</li> <li>• Application of ethical theories.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Content overview</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contexts of the New Testament.</li> <li>• Texts and interpretation of the Person of Jesus.</li> <li>• Interpreting the text and the purpose and authorship.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Options</b> - Students take <b>one</b> of the following six options:</p> <p>4A: Buddhism 4B: Christianity 4C: Hinduism 4D: Islam 4E: Judaism 4F: Sikhism.</p> <p><b>Content overview</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious beliefs, values and teachings.</li> <li>• Sources of wisdom and authority.</li> <li>• Practices that shape and express religious identity.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Assessment overview</b></p> <p>An externally-assessed written examination comprising two sections. Students answer all questions in Section A and one in Section B.</p> <p><b>Section A:</b> Three structured questions.</p> <p><b>Section B:</b> One two-part essay question.</p>			
<p><b>Forbidden combination</b></p> <p>Candidates who enter for Paper 3: New Testament Studies cannot enter for Paper 4B: Christianity and vice versa.</p>			

## A level – choice of **three** papers from the following four options

<p><b>Paper 1: Philosophy of Religion</b></p> <p>⚖️ 33.33%</p> <p>✓ 80 marks</p> <p>🕒 2hrs</p>	<p><b>Paper 2: Religion and Ethics</b></p> <p>⚖️ 33.33%</p> <p>✓ 80 marks</p> <p>🕒 2hrs</p>	<p><b>Paper 3: New Testament Studies</b></p> <p>⚖️ 33.33%</p> <p>✓ 80 marks</p> <p>🕒 2hrs</p>	<p><b>Paper 4: Study of Religion</b></p> <p>⚖️ 33.33%</p> <p>✓ 80 marks</p> <p>🕒 2hrs</p>
<p><b>Content overview</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Philosophical issues.</li> <li>• Nature and influence of religious experience.</li> <li>• Problems of evil and suffering.</li> <li>• Philosophical language.</li> <li>• Works of scholars.</li> <li>• Influences of developments.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Content overview</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant concepts in issues and debates.</li> <li>• Study of three ethical theories.</li> <li>• Application of ethical theories.</li> <li>• Ethical language.</li> <li>• Deontology, Virtue Ethics and the works of scholars.</li> <li>• Medical ethics.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Content overview</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contexts of the New Testament.</li> <li>• Texts and interpretation of the Person of Jesus.</li> <li>• Interpreting the text and the purpose and authorship.</li> <li>• Ways of interpreting the scripture.</li> <li>• Texts and interpretation.</li> <li>• Scientific and historical-critical challenges.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Options</b> - Students take one of the following six options:</p> <p>4A: Buddhism 4B: Christianity 4C: Hinduism 4D: Islam 4E: Judaism 4F: Sikhism.</p> <p><b>Content overview</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious beliefs, values and teachings.</li> <li>• Sources of wisdom and authority.</li> <li>• Practices that shape and express religious identity.</li> <li>• Social and historical developments.</li> <li>• Works of scholars.</li> <li>• Religion and society.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Assessment overview</b></p> <p>An externally-assessed written examination comprising three sections. Students answer all questions in Section A and Section B, and one question in Section C.</p> <p><b>Section A:</b> Two structured questions.</p> <p><b>Section B:</b> Two extended-response questions on an excerpt, sourced from the extracts list. These are published in the relevant pages of the A Level Religious Studies Anthology which can be downloaded from the Pearson qualifications website.</p> <p><b>Section C:</b> One extended essay question.</p>			
<p><b>Forbidden combination</b></p> <p>Candidates who enter for Paper 3: New Testament Studies cannot enter for Paper 4B: Christianity and vice versa.</p>			

# Clear and accessible assessments

We help you and your students to understand the assessment requirements fully.

- Question papers that are straightforward to navigate, with clear and simple instructional text and consistent use of command words.
- Clear and straightforward mark schemes help to indicate the required standard.
- Exam papers are marked by experts to ensure a fair and accurate marking process.

## Extracts from A level Sample Assessment Materials

1 Explore ideas about analogy in the design argument for the existence of God. (8)
2 Assess the debate between Copleston and Russell on religious experience as an argument for the existence of God. (12)
<p><b>Answer ALL questions. Write your answers in the spaces provided. Read the following passage before answering the questions.</b></p> <p>A fine brass 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'?</p> <p>A believer's statement has been so eroded that it is no longer an assertion at all. (Quote from <i>'The Philosophy of Religion'</i>, Flew A, Editor: Mitchell B, by permission of Oxford University Press)</p>
3(a) Clarify the ideas illustrated in this passage about falsification in religious language. <i>You must refer to the passage in your response.</i> (10)
(b) Analyse the implications for religious language from this passage. (20)
4 Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the belief in immortality of the soul and reincarnation. In your response to this question, you must include how developments in Philosophy of Religion have been influenced by one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Religion and Ethics</li><li>• New Testament Studies</li><li>• the study of a religion.</li></ul> (30)

The same question structure is used in each of the papers.

Clear instructions ensure students understand the requirements of the question.

# Co-teachable AS and A level courses

Our Edexcel AS and A level Religious Studies specifications have been developed together and are designed to be completely co-teachable to aid planning and progression.

- The AS has the same number of unit choices as the A level.
- The first three topics in each unit are the same for AS and A level, allowing students to be entered for the AS at the end of the first year.

## Extracts from AS Sample Assessment Materials

1	Explore key ideas about the nature of religious experience.	(8)
2	Assess the strengths of the ontological argument for the existence of God.	(9)
3	Assess the strengths of the design argument for the existence of God.	(9)
4(a)	Explore the key ideas associated with the problem of suffering.	(8)
(b)	Analyse the success of one solution to the problem of suffering	(20)

'Explore', 'Assess' and 'Analyse' are the three command words used at AS. At A level these are also used, in addition to 'Clarify' and 'Evaluate'.



# Expert support and guidance

We provide lots of free support to help you to plan, teach, track, assess and de

## Plan

- Our free **Getting Started guide** gives you an overview of the new AS and A level Religious Studies qualifications to help you understand what the changes mean for you and your students.
- We'll provide a free editable **course planner** and **scheme of work** that you can adapt to suit your department.
- Our **free mapping documents** highlight the key differences and similarities between your current AS/A level Religious Studies specifications and our latest Edexcel specifications.

## Teach

We'll provide lots of free teaching and learning support to help you deliver the new qualifications, including:

- information on **co-teachability**
- **marked exemplars** of student work with **examiner commentaries**.

### Subject support

You can sign up via our Religious Studies page on the website to receive emails and be kept up to date about key dates, training events, news and support.

Call: **0344 463 2817**

Visit online: **[quals.pearson.com/rs-alevel](https://quals.pearson.com/rs-alevel)**

Email: **[TeachingReligiousStudies@pearson.com](mailto:TeachingReligiousStudies@pearson.com)**

Follow us on Twitter: **[@PearsonEdexcel](https://twitter.com/PearsonEdexcel)**

# when you need it

Develop our Edexcel AS and A level Religious Studies with confidence.

## Track and assess

We provide support and resources to help you prepare your students for the assessments, including additional assessment papers, student exemplars and examiner commentaries.

### ResultsPlus

**ResultsPlus** provides the most detailed analysis available of your students' exam performance. Widely used by teachers across the country, this free online service will help you identify the topics and skills where further learning would benefit your students.

# Next Steps ...

## Sign up to teach

### Edexcel AS and A level Religious Studies

If you are interested in teaching our qualifications, be sure to sign up to get all our specification updates and support. Sign up to teach at:

**[quals.pearson.com/rs-alevel](https://quals.pearson.com/rs-alevel)**

For queries, information and support, we're here to help.

 Call us: **0344 463 2817**

 Email us: **TeachingReligiousStudies@pearson.com**

 Follow us: **@PearsonEdexcel**

