

Religious Studies Progression Guide - Moving from GCSE to GCE and beyond

For Students

To enjoy an A level in Religious Studies you must have an enquiring mind, an interest in religion and a desire to examine some of the most important questions which face humankind. You do not need to have a personal religious belief, although it's fine if you do have one. The A level course - like the GCSE - is not a training course for religious leaders, and you do not have to have a GCSE in RS before you can take the A level course. However, for those who have taken the GCSE course, there are many areas of study which will be familiar and for which the GCSE will have helpfully prepared you. Naturally, the demands of A level greater, and you will need to be able to read quite challenging texts, take notes, discuss and examine a range of different issues and write a good examination answer. This all takes time, patience and hard work, but you will learn a tremendous amount in the meantime.

Is it the right subject for me?

Hopefully, your AS and A2 studies will be more than a means to an end for you. This subject has something extra - real value added features:

- Exploring the mysteries of human existence.
- Analysing and evaluating the views of others and substantiating your own.
- Being challenged to seek answers to the mysteries of life and death
- Looking at such issues as 'Does God exist' and 'What happens when we die?'
- Testing the views of others, including scholars. Challenging the evidence and the testimonies.
- Being aware of the historical, social and cultural influences on the way ideas have developed and of how the past influences the future.
- Facing the challenge of exploring questions that have no answers

What will I learn?

The AS qualification consists of two units: the first unit, Foundations 6RSO1, requires you to write three essays on at least two different areas of study in one hour and 45 minutes. The questions are divided into two parts, which test the two assessment objectives. The second unit, Investigations 6RSO2 leads to an hour and 15 minute exam, in which you will be examined on specially chosen topics for which you have undertaken prior research.

The A2 qualification also consists of two units; 6RSO3 (Developments), like Foundations requires three essays (again divided into two parts) from you in an hour and 25 minutes, whilst for the second, 6RSO4 - Implications you will be examined on specially chosen texts from an Anthology which you will study in detail with your teacher.

All these papers require you to write for a long time and to do so at length and in detail, so you must be prepared to build these skills over the two years of your A level studies. The Investigations paper is likely to involve a degree of individual research and study, which you may not have done at GCSE, and this will enable you to become very familiar with a particular area of study, which you may choose yourself, or your teacher may choose for you. You still have to write an exam answer on this area, so you have to balance researching as widely as possible against the demands of the time available.

At A level you are offered a choice of several different disciplines within Religious Studies. You, or more likely your teacher, can choose at least two areas from the following:

- Philosophy of Religion
- Ethics
- Buddhism
- Christianity
- Islam
- Hinduism
- Sikhism
- New Testament.

Religious Studies is designed to encourage you to do the following:

- Investigate, study and interpret significant religious, philosophical and ethical issues.
- Think rigorously and present widely informed and detailed arguments with well-substantiated conclusions.
- Reflect on, express and justify your opinions
- Relate your study to issues in the wider world
- Know and understand key concepts - including beliefs, teachings, the contribution of significant people, religious language, major issues and doctrines and how these are expressed in texts.
- Interpret and evaluate religious concepts, ideas, arguments and the views of scholars.

You have already done many of these things at GCSE, and at A level you are simply moving on to do these at a higher level. There will be more critical evaluation demanded of you - considering the value of arguments, beliefs and theories and why people hold them to be true or false - and you will need more knowledge and information, which you will come to understand at a greater depth than for GCSE. However, armed with your GCSE skills, you will be ready to undertake this challenge with confidence!

How will I be assessed?

All assessment is undertaken under exam conditions and your answers are assessed against assessment objectives, which fall into two categories:

- AO1 - Knowledge and understanding: 70% at AS, 60% at A2
- AO2 - Critical argument and justification of a point of view: 30% at AS, 40% at A2

As you move from AS to A2 you will be expected to demonstrate a wider range and depth of knowledge and understanding and a greater maturity of thought and expression, so the weighting of the objectives shifts as you move to A2 and more marks are proportionally credited to AO2 than AO1. You need to be aware of the difference between AO1 and AO2. The former requires you to look at the issue and explain the facts, issues and arguments. The latter requires you to weigh these matters up and evaluate them - are they right or wrong, strong or weak. You have done this already at GCSE when you are asked to consider your opinion *and* to consider possible alternative or opposing views. There are certain phrases that you may find useful to do this:

- This is important because
- The most significant is...because
- However...
- On the other hand...
- It is likely that...because

- Therefore...
- Nevertheless...
- The implications of this are...

As you work keep asking yourself 'Why is this relevant to my answer?' and 'What are the implications of this view/issue?'

The use of **trigger words** in questions enables you to identify the particular skills you are required to deploy. AO1 trigger words invite you to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding, whilst AO2 trigger words invite you to evaluate that knowledge. You have responded to trigger words in your GCSE examination questions, but they were relatively few. Words you might expect to see in AS and A2 questions may include:

At AS:

AO1 Trigger Words: Describe, examine, identify, outline, select, what, how, illustrate, for what reasons, give an account of, in what ways.

AO2 Trigger Words: Comment on, consider, how far, to what extent, why.

At A2

AO1 Trigger Words: analyse, clarify, compare and contrast, differentiate, distinguish between, define, examine, explain, comment critically.

AO2 Trigger Words: assess, why, consider critically, criticise, discuss, evaluate, interpret, justify, to what extent

You will be asked to demonstrate that you have fulfilled the objectives by the acquisition of knowledge and the deployment of skills. Hence, you need to develop the following abilities:

- Recall, select, and deploy knowledge
- Identify, investigate and analyse questions and issues arising from it
- Use appropriate and correct language and terminology
- Interpret and evaluate relevant concepts
- Communicate, using reasoned argument substantiated by evidence
- Make connections between areas of study and other aspects of experience.

As you prepare for your AS and A2 examinations, there are stages which your teacher will directly help you with, and stages which you must be prepared to work on alone. In the end, they cannot go into the exam and do it for you, and whilst they can give you information and guide you in the best practice for utilising it in the exam, you have make sure you have learned it and developed an effective examination technique. This means:

- Develop good classroom habits - come fully prepared for the lesson.
- Ask questions about the material. Questions can help you to clarify what you have just heard as well as clearing up misunderstandings.
- Ask questions about the implications of the material and about how it relates to other aspects of the syllabus.
- Practice the vital skill of evaluation. Be prepared to discuss issues.
- Be prepared in turn for your views to be evaluated by others, and to explain why you hold them
- Practice past questions
- Read articles, watch useful television programs to increase your knowledge and understanding of a topic
- Prepare thoroughly for the examination by making concise revision notes, learning quotations, and making essay plans.

For Teachers

How can Edexcel help you make the progression?

In the same way that Edexcel provides textbooks and guidance for your path through GCSE, they provide guidance through the AS and A2 courses. Edexcel publish two dedicated student textbooks by Sarah K Tyler and Gordon Reid, one for AS and one for A2.

Edexcel also provide help via the Edexcel website. The Ask the Expert service is available for teachers, and helpful downloads, including a work book/study guide for Unit 4 Implications are available free of charge. The full specification, sample assessment materials and a Getting Started guidance booklet are all available for free download from the website. GCE: - <http://www.edexcel.com/quals/gce/gce08/rs/Pages/default.aspx> and GCSE : - <http://www.edexcel.com/quals/gcse/gcse09/rs/Pages/default.aspx>

Regular examination feedback INSETs are run by Edexcel giving teachers the opportunity to speak directly with senior examiners and to receive guidance on teaching the specification and preparing students for the demands of the exam, as well as sharing good practice with fellow professionals.

Edexcel have produced a mapping document which shows at a glance how the content for AS and A2 Religious Studies compares with that of OCR and AQA, as well as a suggested scheme of work for AS and A2 options in Philosophy, Ethics, New Testament, and World Religions option, which can be adapted to suit centre needs. This can be downloaded on <http://www.edexcel.com/quals/gce/gce08/rs/Pages/default.aspx>

Progression from GSCE to GCE A level: Content and material

For the purpose of this progression document, links between the following units have been mapped:

Unit 1: *Religion and Life based on a Study of Christianity and at least one other religion*

NB: a high level of shared content between this unit and units 2-7 renders it unnecessary to map units 2-7 separately.

Unit 8: *Religion and Society based on a study of Christianity and at least one other religion*

Unit 9: *Christianity*

NB: Teachers of Unit 10: Roman Catholic Christianity will find useful information in this table.

Unit 16: *Mark's Gospel*

The maps below provide information regarding *direct* links between the GCSE units. Where there is no direct link, there are invariably implicit links to many areas of the GCE specification.

Unit 1: Religion and Life based on a Study of Christianity and at least one other religion

GCSE Unit content: Section 1: 1 Believing in God	Overlap with AS Foundations Unit 1 6RSO1	Overlap with AS Investigations Unit 2 6RSO2	A2 overlap
Religious Experience		Area B: The study of the philosophy of religion (Religious Experience).	6RSO3 - Philosophy of Religion option: a study of philosophical arguments about the of God - religious experience 6RSO4 - Anthology passage on Religious Experience.
The Argument from Design	Philosophy of Religion option: A study of philosophical arguments about the existence of God - the Design Argument.		
The Argument from Causation	Philosophy of Religion option: A study of philosophical arguments about the existence of God - the Cosmological Argument.		
Scientific explanations of the origin of the world.		Areas A, the study of religion, E, the study of the Old Testament/Jewish Bible, and F, the study of the New Testament (all Religion and Science).	
Unanswered prayers (non belief in God)			May be explored as a preliminary idea in unit 6RSO3 Philosophy of Religion: a study of philosophical arguments about the existence of God - non-existence of God.
Evil and Suffering	Philosophy of Religion option: A study of selected problems in the		

	philosophy of religion - problems of evil and suffering, different types of problems and solutions.		
GCSE Unit content: Section 1: 2 Matters of Life and Death	Overlap with AS Foundations Unit 1 6RSO1	Overlap with AS Investigations Unit 2 6RSO2	A2 overlap
Life after Death		Area F: the study of the New Testament (Life after Death)	6RSO3 - Philosophy of Religion option: a study of selected problems I the philosophy of religion - Beliefs about life after death.
Abortion		Area B: the study of Ethics (Medical Ethics)	
Euthanasia		Area B: the study of Ethics (Medical Ethics)	
GCSE Unit content: Section 1: 3 Marriage and the Family	Overlap with AS Foundations Unit 1 6RSO1	Overlap with AS Investigations Unit 2 6RSO2	A2 overlap
Sex outside marriage	Ethics option: A study of ethical dilemmas - Sexual Ethics	Area F: the study of the New Testament (New Testament ethics and morality)	
Divorce		Area F: the study of the New Testament (New Testament ethics and morality)	
Homosexuality	Ethics option: A study of ethical dilemmas - Sexual Ethics	Area F: the study of the New Testament (New Testament ethics and morality)	
Contraception	Ethics option: A study of ethical dilemmas - Sexual Ethics	Area B: the study of ethics (Medical Ethics) and Area F: the study of the New Testament (New Testament ethics and morality)	
GCSE Unit content: Section 1. 4 Religion and Community Cohesion	Overlap with AS Foundations Unit 1 6RSO1	Overlap with AS Investigations Unit 2 6RSO2	A2 overlap
Equal rights for women		Area B: the study of ethics (equality)	
UK as a multi- ethnic/multi-faith society		Area B: the study of ethics (equality)	

Promotion of racial harmony and community cohesion		Area B: the study of ethics (equality)	
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Unit 8: Religion and Society based on a study of Christianity and at least one other religion

GCSE Unit content: Section 1.1 Religion: Rights and Responsibilities	Overlap with AS Foundations Unit 1 6RSO1	Overlap with AS Investigations Unit 2 6RSO2	A2 overlap
Using the Bible, church, authority, conscience, and other authorities in moral decision-making.	Ethics option: A study of ethical concepts - the relationship between religion and morality.		6RSO3 - Ethics option: A study of ethical concepts - critiques of the relationship between religion and morality.
Situation Ethics	Ethics option: A study of ethical concepts - Situation Ethics		
Human Rights			6RSO3 - Ethics option: A study of selected problems in ethics - Justice, law and punishment
Moral duties and responsibilities	Ethics option generally	Area B: the study of ethics generally	Ethics options generally
Genetic Engineering		Area B: the study of Ethics (Medical Ethics)	
GCSE Unit content: Section 1.2 Religion: environmental and medical issues	Overlap with AS Foundations Unit 1 6RSO1	Overlap with AS Investigations Unit 2 6RSO2	A2 overlap
Global arming, pollution, natural resources, stewardship and attitudes to the environment.		Area B: the study of ethics (Natural World)	
Medical Treatments for Infertility		Area B: the study of Ethics (Medical Ethics)	
Transplant surgery		Area B: the study of Ethics (Medical Ethics)	
GCSE Unit content: Section 1.3 Peace and Conflict	Overlap with AS Foundations Unit 1 6RSO1	Overlap with AS Investigations Unit 2 6RSO2	A2 overlap
World peace, cause of wars, just war,	Ethics option: A study of ethical		

religious attitudes to war.	dilemmas - Issues of war and peace.		
GCSE Unit content: Section 1.4 Religion: Crime and Punishment	Overlap with AS Foundations Unit 1 6RSO1	Overlap with AS Investigations Unit 2 6RSO2	A2 overlap
Law and justice, theories of punishment, capital punishment,			6RSO3 - Ethics option: A study of selected problems in ethics - Justice, law and punishment

Unit 9: Christianity

GCSE Unit content: Section 1.1 Beliefs and Values	Overlap with AS Foundations Unit 1 6RSO1	Overlap with AS Investigations Unit 2 6RSO2	A2 overlap
God as unity, Trinity, Father, Creator	Christianity option: key emphases in teaching and practice - Christian beliefs about God.		6RSO3 - Christianity option: Selected concepts and texts: Modern beliefs about the Trinity.
Jesus as Son of God	Christianity option: the Church's teaching about the life, person and work of Jesus.	Area G: the study of Christianity and the Christian Church - Christian Belief and Practice.	
Salvation from Sin	Christianity option: the Church's teaching about the life, person and work of Jesus.	Area G: the study of Christianity and the Christian Church - Christian Belief and Practice.	6RSO3 - Christianity option: Selected concepts and texts: beliefs about atonement and salvation.
Love of God	Christianity option: key emphases in teaching and practice - Christian beliefs about God.		
GCSE Unit content: Section 1.3 Worship and Celebration	Overlap with AS Foundations Unit 1 6RSO1	Overlap with AS Investigations Unit 2 6RSO2	A2 overlap
Baptism	Christianity option: key emphases in teaching and practice - Christian worship, baptism and Eucharist.		
Eucharist	Christianity option: key emphases in teaching and practice - Christian worship, baptism and Eucharist.		

GCSE Unit content: Section 1.4 Living the Christian Life	Overlap with AS Foundations Unit 1 6RSO1	Overlap with AS Investigations Unit 2 6RSO2	A2 overlap
Role of Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount	Ethics option: A study of ethical concepts - the relationship between religion and morality. May be used as general discussion material.	Area G: the study of Christianity and the Christian Church - Christian Belief and Practice.	
Relief of Poverty		Area G: the study of Christianity and the Christian Church - Christian Belief and Practice	

Unit 16: Mark's Gospel

NB: AS and A2 study of the New Testament focuses on either Luke's Gospel OR the Fourth Gospel. The mapping links made here indicate where topics within the gospel study are connected.

GCSE Unit content: Section 1.1 Discipleship	Overlap with AS Foundations Unit 1 6RSO1	Overlap with AS Investigations Unit 2 6RSO2	A2 overlap
Nature of Discipleship	New Testament Option: Key emphases - the nature and demands of discipleship.		
Costs of Discipleship	New Testament Option: Key emphases - the nature and demands of discipleship.		
GCSE Unit content: Section 1.2 Conflict and Argument	Overlap with AS Foundations Unit 1 6RSO1	Overlap with AS Investigations Unit 2 6RSO2	A2 overlap
Conflicts over healings, Sabbath, meaning of the law, arguments about authority.	New Testament Option: Key issues in the teachings of Jesus Christ - 'I am' Sayings, meaning and significance of miracles.		6RSO3 - New Testament Option: selected concepts and texts - conflict with the religious and political authorities.
Conflict over passion predictions			6RSO3 - New Testament Option: selected concepts and texts - conflict with the religious and political authorities.

The meaning and significance of the plot to kill Jesus.			6RSO3 - New Testament Option: selected concepts and texts - conflict with the religious and political authorities.
GCSE Unit content: Section 1.3 Death and Resurrection	Overlap with AS Foundations Unit 1 6RSO1	Overlap with AS Investigations Unit 2 6RSO2	A2 overlap
Betrayal, arrest, trials before High Priest and Pilate.			6RSO3 - New Testament Option: selected concepts and texts - conflict with the religious and political authorities.
Crucifixion, burial, resurrection.			6RSO3 - New Testament Option: selected concepts and texts - conflict with the religious and political authorities 6RSO4 New Testament option - several anthology texts on death and resurrection of Jesus.
GCSE Unit content: Section 1.4 The identity of Jesus	Overlap with AS Foundations Unit 1 6RSO1	Overlap with AS Investigations Unit 2 6RSO2	A2 overlap
Miracles and the identity of Jesus	New Testament Option: Key issues in the teachings of Jesus Christ - 'I am' Sayings, meaning and significance of miracles.	Area F: the study of the New Testament (Religion and Science).	
Titles of Jesus			6RSO4 New Testament option - anthology texts the titles of Jesus