



Getting Started Guide

GCSE (9-1) Religious Studies A

Pearson Edexcel Level 1/Level 2 GCSE (9-1) in Religious Studies A (1RA0)

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1. Introduction

This Getting Started guide provides an overview of the new GCSE Religious Studies specification A, Faith and Practice in the 21st Century, to help you get to grips with the changes to content and assessment and to help you understand what these mean for you and your students.

We are providing a package of support to help you plan and implement the new specification.

- Planning: In addition to the section in this guide, we will be providing course planners and schemes of work that you can adapt to suit your department.
- Additional specimen papers for some of the religions and options so that you can have extra papers to use with students in preparing for the exams.
- Student exemplar answers with examiner commentary.

These support documents will be available on the GCSE 2016 Religious Studies A page of the Pearson qualifications website.

2. What's changed?

2.1 What are the changes to the GCSE qualification?

GCSE Religious Studies specifications are changing for first assessment 2018: these changes therefore apply to all two-year courses from 2016 and three-year courses from 2015.

- There will be a new 9-1 grading system, with 9 being the top level (see page 23).
- There will be no coursework or controlled assessment components: all assessment, as now, will be through external examinations.
- There will be a fully linear structure, with all exams sat at the end of the course.
- GCSE Religious Studies qualifications will be untiered. There will be tiers in only a small number of subjects, such as Maths.

Changes to GCSE Religious Studies content requirements

The content requirements for GCSE Religious Studies have been revised by the DfE. All awarding organisations' specifications for GCSE Religious Studies must meet these criteria.

The key points from the content requirements are:

- Students must now study **two** religions from a choice of Buddhism, Christianity or Catholic Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism or Sikhism; previously schools could follow a single faith route.
- The subject criteria now contain more content and details of Areas of Study for each religion.
- Specific philosophical, ethical and religious themes have been introduced.
- The subject criteria have been split into two parts (A & B) to allow specifications to be designed with two different approaches
 - One allows a 75/25 split between 2 religions
 - One allows a 50/50 split between 2 religions

This Getting Started guide is for Specification A, which has the 75%/25% split. (For details of Specification B which has the 50%/50% split, please see the Getting Started Guide for Specification B.)

Changes to Assessment Objectives

The GCSE Religious Studies Assessment Objectives have also been revised.

AO1 50%	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● beliefs, practices and sources of authority ● influence on individuals, communities and societies ● similarities and differences within and/or between religions and beliefs
AO2 50%	Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief, including their significance and influence

2. What's changed?

Timeline and league table points

Specification	2016	2017	2018
Current specification	Summer series as normal	Last assessment	
NEW 2016 specifications	First teaching of two-year course		First assessment for full course

The last available assessment of the current Religious Studies GCSEs will be June 2017. Only the reformed GCSEs will be reported in the 2018 performance tables. Therefore, it is possible to enter Year 10 students for the 2017 summer series of the current GCSE, but the results for this Year 10 cohort will not count in the school's 2018 performance tables.

2.2 Changes to the Edexcel specification

Two different GCSE Religious Studies specifications

As the new content requirements now allow awarding bodies to develop two separate qualifications to meet the needs of all schools, from 2016 we are offering two separate Edexcel GCSE Religious Studies specifications. This guide is all about the Edexcel GCSE Religious Studies Specification A which allows you to focus primarily on one religion (75% of the content) and on a second religion (25% of the content).

Specified religions

The DfE requirements state that **two** of the following religions must be studied:

- Catholic Christianity **OR** Christianity
- Islam
- Buddhism
- Judaism
- Hinduism
- Sikhism

For Specification A (see table below), it is possible to study Christianity, Catholic Christianity or Islam as the primary religion, with a choice of the religions above for the second religion.

GCSE Religious Studies Specification A Full Course overview

GCSE Religious Studies Specification A allows students to undertake an in-depth study of Catholic Christianity, Christianity or Islam and encourages a critical and reflective approach to the study of religion. This specification allows for a greater emphasis to be placed on the study of a specific religion and brings to life the foundations of faith and practice.

- There are four papers – students study **three** of these four papers.
- Paper 1 and Paper 2 are compulsory and must cover two separate religions (NB: Christianity cannot be taken with Catholic Christianity).
- There is a choice between Papers 3 and 4: the religion studied must be the same as the religion studied in Paper 1.

Paper 1: Study of Religion	50%	<p>Paper 1: Catholic Christianity, Christianity OR Islam</p> <p>Four compulsory content areas based on the chosen religion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beliefs and Teachings • Practices • Sources of Wisdom and Authority • Forms of Expression and Ways of Life
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2. What's changed?

Paper 2: Study of a second religion	25%	<p>Paper 2: Catholic Christianity, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism or Sikhism</p> <p>Religion studied must be different from the religion studied in Paper 1; students are not permitted to study Catholic Christianity AND Christianity.</p> <p>Two compulsory content areas based on the chosen religion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beliefs and Teachings • Practices
EITHER Paper 3: Philosophy and Ethics	25%	<p>Paper 3: Philosophy and Ethics – Catholic Christianity, Christianity OR Islam</p> <p>Two compulsory content areas based on the chosen religion from Paper 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arguments for the Existence of God • Religious Teachings on Relationships and Families in the 21st century
OR Paper 4: Textual Studies (Mark's Gospel or The Qur'an)	25%	<p>Paper 4: Textual Studies</p> <p>Two compulsory content areas based on the chosen religion from Paper 1</p> <p>Mark's Gospel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is Jesus? • The Nature of Discipleship <p>The Qur'an</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beliefs and Teachings of Islam • Lives of the Prophets and others

Constructing a coherent course

For GCSE Religious Studies Specification A, it is possible to study Christianity, Catholic Christianity or Islam as the primary religion, with a choice of Catholic Christianity, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism or Sikhism for the second religion. For the full course, there is also a choice of Philosophy of Ethics (Paper 3) or Textual Studies (Paper 4).

Some examples of how to plan the course can be found in Section 3 of this guide, as well as a wide selection of planners and schemes of work available on the website.

Changes to specification content

The DfE published the content for GCSE Religious Studies which can be found on their website. The areas of content for each religion are listed here and can be found in the specifications.

The overview table below indicates areas of broad content overlap between the 2009/2012 Edexcel GCSE specification and the new 2016 specification. However, it should be noted that the new subject content defined by the DfE is significantly more detailed, so it is crucial that the detailed content in the specification is read carefully to ensure that the new content is covered in the correct depth.

2009/2012 Edexcel GCSE Specification	2016 Edexcel GCSE Specification
<i>Students take TWO of the following units</i>	<i>Students take Paper 1 and Paper 2 and either Paper 3 or Paper 4</i>
Unit 1: Religion and Life Based on a Study of Christianity and at least one other religion	Papers 1 and 2 Study of Religion both cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beliefs • Practices • Sources of wisdom and authority • Forms of expression and ways of life Paper 3 Philosophy and Ethics covers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arguments for the existence of God • Religious teachings on relationships and families in the 21st century <p><i>A number of the above topics and sub-headings have overlap with the current GCSE topics.</i></p>
Unit 2-7: Religion and Life Based on a study of Christianity/Roman Catholic Christianity/Islam/Judaism/Hinduism/Sikhism All these units cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believing in God • Matters of life and death • Marriage and the family • Religion and community cohesion 	
Unit 8: Religion and Society Based on a study of Christianity and at least one other religion This unit covers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rights and responsibilities • Environmental and medical issues • Peace and conflict • Crime and punishment 	
Unit 9-15: Christianity/Roman Catholic Christianity/Islam/Judaism/Hinduism/Sikhism All these units cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beliefs and values 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and tradition • Worship and celebration • Living the religious life 	
Unit 16: Mark's Gospel This unit covers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipleship • Conflict and argument • Death and resurrection • The identity of Jesus 	Paper 4: Textual studies Mark's Gospel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is Jesus? • The Nature of discipleship

3. Planning

3.1 Planning and delivering a linear course

The new GCSE Religious Studies Specification A full is linear which means that all papers must be sat at the end of the course.

There are a number of ways to deliver the course and some options are laid out below in 3.3. These models, along with the planners on the website, are designed for centres to adapt to their own circumstances and teaching methods.

Some centres choose to start the course in Year 9. This still remains a valid option and there are a variety of 3-year planners on the website to help the delivery of the course over both 2 and 3 years.

As stated in Section 1 of this guide, the first assessment for the new GCSE will be in 2018. The last assessment for the current (2013) GCSE is summer 2017. The results from the last assessment in June 2017 will appear in the 2017 performance tables. The new full course GCSEs will count in the 2018 tables.

3.2 Delivery models for the full course

The top-level tables below suggest ways of splitting the content over either 2 years or 3 years and how much to cover in each week. There are a number of course planners available on the website which provide more detail. Note that the suggested weeks available are likely to vary year on year due to Easter and other religious holidays.

Example 2-year plan for GCSE RS Specification A

This example takes the same integrated approach as the course planners on the website, with one section of each paper taught sequentially – so that content from all three papers is taught in each year. For a 2-year course taking this approach, it is suggested that one bullet point in each section is covered per week.

Term	Weeks (approx.)	Proposed content coverage
Year 10		
Autumn Term 1	7 weeks	Paper 1: Section 1 Content bullet points 1-7
Autumn Term 2	7 weeks	Paper 1: Section 1 Content bullet point 8 Paper 2: Section 1 Content bullet points 1-6
Spring Term 1	6 weeks	Paper 2; Section 1 Content bullet points 7-8 Paper 3 OR 4: Section 1 Content bullet points 1-4
Spring Term 2	6 weeks (dependent on Easter)	Paper 3 OR 4: Section 1 Content bullet points 5-8 Paper 1: Section 2 Content bullet points 1-2

Summer Term 1	6 weeks	Paper 1: Section 2 Content bullet points 3-8
Summer Term 2	6 weeks	Paper 2: Section 2 Content bullet points 1-6
Year 11		
Autumn Term 1	7 weeks	Paper 2: Section 2 Content bullet points 7-8 Paper 3 OR 4: Section 2 Content bullet points 1-5
Autumn Term 2	7 weeks	Paper 3 OR 4: Section 2 Content bullet points 6-8 Paper 1: Section 3 Content bullet points 1-4
Spring Term 1	7 weeks	Paper 1: Section 3 Content bullet points 5-8 Paper 1: Section 4 Content bullet points 1-3
Spring Term 2	6 weeks (dependent on Easter)	Paper 1: Section 4 Content bullet points 4-8 Start revision
Summer Term 1	6 weeks	Revision and revisiting topics
Summer Term 2		Examinations

Example 3-year plan for GCSE RS Specification A

This example takes the same integrated approach as the course planners on the website, with one section of each paper taught sequentially. For a 3-year course following this approach, it is suggested that each bullet point is covered in 1.5 weeks, so that each section is covered in 12 weeks. This means that one section is taught per term, with two additional weeks in the autumn term that can be used for an introduction in Year 9 and a recap in Years 10 and 11.

Term	Approximate number of weeks	Proposed content coverage
Year 9		
Autumn Term	14 weeks	Paper 1: Section 1
Spring Term	12 weeks	Paper 2: Section 1
Summer Term	12 weeks	Paper 3 OR 4: Section 1
Year 10		
Autumn Term	14 weeks	Paper 1: Section 2
Spring Term	12 weeks	Paper 2: Section 2
Summer Term 2	12 weeks	Paper 3 OR 4 Section 2

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Year 11		
Autumn Term	14 weeks	Paper 1: Section 3
Spring Term	12 weeks	Paper 1: Section 4
Summer Term	6 weeks	Revision and examinations

4. Assessment guidance

4.1 Assessment overview

Students sit three papers: Paper 1 and Paper 2, plus either Paper 3 or Paper 4. Each paper has one question to cover each content area. This question is split into 4 parts (a)-(d); these parts follow the same pattern and command words.

Paper 1: Study of Religion (full course)

<i>Written examination: 1 hour and 45 minutes</i>			
<i>50% of the qualification; 102 marks</i>			
Beliefs and Teachings	1(a)	3 marks	AO1
	1(b)	4 marks	AO1
	1(c)	5 marks	AO1
	1(d)	12 marks + 3 SPaG	AO2
Practices	2(a)	3 marks	AO1
	2(b)	4 marks	AO1
	2(c)	5 marks	AO1
	2(d)	12 marks	AO2
Sources of Wisdom and Authority	3(a)	3 marks	AO1
	3(b)	4 marks	AO1
	3(c)	5 marks	AO1
	3(d)	12 marks + 3 SPaG	AO2
Forms of Expression and Ways of Life	4(a)	3 marks	AO1
	4(b)	4 marks	AO1
	4(c)	5 marks	AO1
	4(d)	12 marks	AO2

Paper 2 – Study of Second Religion (full course)

<i>Written examination: 50 minutes</i>			
<i>25% of the qualification; 51 marks</i>			
Beliefs and Teachings	1(a)	3 marks	AO1
	1(b)	4 marks	AO1
	1(c)	5 marks	AO1
	1(d)	12 marks + 3 SPaG	AO2
Practices	2(a)	3 marks	AO1
	2(b)	4 marks	AO1
	2(c)	5 marks	AO1
	2(d)	12 marks	AO2

4. Assessment guidance

Paper 3: Philosophy and Ethics (full course)

<i>Written examination: 50 minutes</i>			
<i>25% of the qualification; 51 marks</i>			
Arguments for the Existence of God	1(a)	3 marks	AO1
	1(b)	4 marks	AO1
	1(c)	5 marks	AO1
	1(d)	12 marks + 3 SPaG	AO2
Religious Teachings on Relationships and Families in the 21st Century	2(a)	3 marks	AO1
	2(b)	4 marks	AO1
	2(c)	5 marks	AO1
	2(d)	12 marks	AO2

Paper 4: Textual Studies (full course)

<i>Written examination: 50 minutes</i>			
<i>25% of the qualification; 51 marks</i>			
Mark's Gospel • Who is Jesus? OR The Qur'an • Beliefs and Teachings of Islam	1(a)	3 marks	AO1
	1(b)	4 marks	AO1
	1(c)	5 marks	AO1
	1(d)	12 marks + 3 SPaG	AO2
Mark's Gospel • The Nature of Discipleship OR The Qur'an • Lives of the Prophets and others.	2(a)	3 marks	AO1
	2(b)	4 marks	AO1
	2(c)	5 marks	AO1
	2(d)	12 marks	AO2

4.2. Part (a) questions

Part (a) is worth 3 marks. It assesses AO1 and tests knowledge of religion or belief by recalling factual information.

Part (a) questions will follow one of two formats:

- Outline three
- State three

Part (a) 'Outline' questions

These questions will ask students to outline three different elements. These could be features, elements, beliefs, responses, teachings etc.

The command word 'Outline' requires students to provide knowledge of religion and belief by recalling factual information. Therefore, for this response, students are required to write three sentences to outline the pieces of information required by the question. They are not required to add any extra detail such as development, description or added examples or quotations.

These questions will be marked using a points-based mark scheme. The one below is for Paper 1: Catholic Christianity, Q3(a) in response to the question:

Outline three features of the New Testament

All of the 'Outline' questions for the full course will follow a very similar pattern.

There is always a clear instruction about how marks should be awarded. These can also be used to advise students that they need three separate and different points.

The mark scheme will always state how many marks are awarded for each AO.

Question number	Answer	Mark
3(a)	<p>AO1 3 marks</p> <p>Award one mark for each point identified up to a maximum of three.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The New Testament was written by disciples of Jesus (1) • Most of the New Testament was composed soon after Jesus' death (1) • The Gospels were written to provide a record of Jesus' words and actions (1) • Part of the New Testament contains letters of advice to Christian communities (1) • The early Church decided what should be included in the New Testament (1) <p>Accept any other valid responses</p>	3

The mark scheme will provide more than 3 possible responses and instruct that any other valid responses should be accepted.

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Part (a) 'State' questions

These part (a) questions require students to recognise other religious traditions in Great Britain. The command word 'State' also requires students to provide knowledge of religion and belief by recalling factual information. Therefore, for this response, students will be required to state three different religions, other than the one they have studied, in Great Britain. As with the 'Outline' questions, they are not required to provide any extra detail.

These questions will be marked using a points-based mark scheme. The one below is for Paper 1: Christianity, Q1(a) in response to the question:

State three religious traditions, other than Christianity, in Great Britain

All of the 'State' questions for the full course will follow a very similar pattern.

Question number	Answer	Mark
1(a)	AO1 3 marks Award one mark for each point identified up to a maximum of three. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Judaism (1)• Islam (1)• Buddhism (1)• Sikhism (1)• Hinduism (1)	3

Again there is an instruction as to how marks should be awarded, which can also be used to advise students that they need three separate and different religions to gain all three marks. Note here that the acceptable responses are the main religions of Great Britain.

4.3 Part (b) questions

Part (b) is worth 4 marks. It is designed to test AO1 and will test knowledge of religion or belief by recalling factual information.

These questions will follow one of two formats:

- Explain two
- Describe two

Part (b) 'Explain' questions

These questions will ask students to explain two elements. These could be ways, reasons etc.

The command word 'Explain' requires students to provide knowledge of religion and belief and develop this beyond a habitual response. Therefore, for this response, students are required to give two reasons and then demonstrate a higher level of understanding by developing this reason. The development must address the question and link clearly with the reason given, supplying more information about the question asked. Students need to give one reason and develop this reason and then give a second, different reason and develop this in a different way to the first reason.

These questions will be marked using a points-based mark scheme. The one below is for Paper 1: Islam, Q4(b) in response to the question:

Explain two ways the Muslim identity is expressed in the ummah

All of the 'Explain' questions for the full course will follow a very similar pattern.

The marking instruction indicates that students need to give two reasons and develop both reasons to gain the marks.

Question number	Answer	Reject	Mark
1(b)	<p>AO1 4 marks</p> <p>Award one mark for providing a reason. Award a second mark for development of the reason. Up to a maximum of four marks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Life is a test which will be rewarded/punished on judgement day (1) by Allah who is the judge of everyone No one knows when Judgement day will happen (1) which means every day must be lived carefully to ensure there is no sin Humans are responsible for their own actions (1) and there will be no forgiveness for sins after death <p>Accept any other valid response</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeated reason/judgement Reject development that does not relate both to the reason given and to the question 	4

The bullets here are split into two. The first part exemplifies reasons students might give in response to the question. The second part of the bullet is the development students may provide to support the reason.

This column has instructions to reject repeated reasons or developments, or developments not linked to both the reason and the question.

Part (b) 'Describe' questions

One of the DfE content requirements is that students study one chosen religion within the context of the wider British society whose religious traditions are, in the main, Christian.

This means that, in some part (b) questions, students will need to compare and contrast two areas of belief and practice within other religions with those areas in Christianity. The two areas of content where this is a requirement are marked with asterisks (*) in the specification.

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These questions will ask students to describe two differences between the religion the paper is assessing and the main religious tradition of Great Britain. On the Christianity papers, this question will ask students to describe two differences between Christianity and another religion they have studied.

The command word 'Describe' requires students to provide an understanding of religion and belief and contrast with that of another. Therefore, for this response, students are required to give two relevant beliefs/practices from the religion the paper is assessing and then two contrasting descriptions from a Christian tradition. The development must address the question and contrast clearly with the belief or practice identified in the first part of the response, supplying more information about the question asked. Students need to describe one belief/practice and contrast this belief/practice from the other religion and then give a second, different belief/practice and contrast this in a different way from the first description.

These questions will be marked using a points-based mark scheme. The one below is for Paper 1: Catholic Christianity, Q2(b) in response to the question:

Describe two differences in forms of worship between Catholic Christianity and other forms of the main religious tradition of Great Britain

All of the 'Describe' questions for the full course will follow a very similar pattern.

Question number	Answer	Mark
2(b)	<p>AO1 4 marks</p> <p>Students are required to recognise that Christianity is the main religious tradition of Great Britain</p> <p>Award one mark for describing a relevant Catholic belief/practice. Award a second mark for a contrasting description from another Christian tradition. Up to a maximum of four marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Eucharist is central to Catholic worship with communion being offered at Mass (1) whereas some Christians do not celebrate the Eucharist (1) • Catholic worship follows a fixed pattern and include structured liturgy (1) whereas in other Christian traditions worship is more charismatic focusing on the Bible and guidance by the Holy Spirit (1) • Catholics may use objects of devotion such as the rosary (1) some other Christians would not regard their use as important (1) <p>Accept any other valid response</p>	4

The mark scheme indicates that students need to recognise that Christianity is the main religious belief and that they need to give two relevant beliefs/practices with two contrasting Christian traditions.

The bullets here are split into two: the first part exemplifies Catholic belief/practice; the second part of the bullet is the contrasting Christian tradition.

4.4 Part (c) questions

Part (c) questions are worth 4 marks. They assess AO1 and test knowledge of religion or belief by recalling factual information. They will follow the same format:

- Explain two... In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

Note that the part (c) questions are similar to the (b) 'Explain' questions, but also ask students to refer to a source of wisdom and authority in their response. The sources of wisdom provided in the specification and in the support materials are listed to assist teachers and give ideas for relevant passages and sources. Other relevant sources will also be accepted as valid responses.

'Explain' for part (c) questions

These questions are worth 5 marks and will ask students to explain two elements. These could be ways, reasons, teachings etc. The command word 'Explain' for part (c) questions requires students to provide knowledge of religion and belief and develop this beyond a habitual response as well as reference to one source of wisdom and authority. Therefore, for this response, students are required to give two reasons and then demonstrate a higher level of understanding by developing this reason. The development must address the question and link clearly with the reason given, supplying more information about the question asked. Students need to give one reason and develop this reason and then give a second, different reason and develop this in a different way to the first reason.

These questions will be marked and assessed using a points based mark scheme. The one below is for Paper 2: Judaism, Q1(b) in response to the question:

Explain two Jewish teachings about the covenant with Abraham

All of the 'Explain' questions for the full course will follow a very similar pattern.

The bullets are split into three. The first part exemplifies reasons students might give in response to the question. The second part is development students may provide to support the reason. The third part is the source of wisdom and authority which the student may use.

The marking instructions indicate that students need to give two reasons and develop both reasons to gain the marks and how to integrate a source of wisdom and authority into their response.

Question number	Answer	Mark
1(c)	<p>AO1 5 marks</p> <p>Award one mark for each reason/belief. Award further marks for each development of the reason/belief up to a maximum of four marks. Award one further mark for any relevant source of wisdom or authority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a covenant where the Almighty promises the land of Canaan to the Jews (1) which has been a central theme of Judaism throughout history (1) as seen in Genesis 17:8: 'The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God'. (1) • The Almighty promises Abraham that he will be the father of many nations (1) meaning the earth will be blessed through 	

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	<p>his children (1) as seen in Genesis 17:5-6: ‘for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you’ (1).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is affirmed in the covenant with Moses (1) showing that the covenant is everlasting for Jews today (1) as seen in Genesis 17:9: ‘As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendant after you for the generations to come’. (1) <p>Accept any other valid response</p>	5
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Note that for the source of wisdom and authority, the indicative content provides an accurate quotation, but there is no expectation that students will learn quotations to include in their response. Students need to state a source but can paraphrase and/or make textual references to this source. Each bullet of indicative content has a relevant source of wisdom and authority but students are only expected to provide one source in their response.

The mark scheme instructs that any other valid response should be accepted. Therefore students can be taught other relevant sources of wisdom and authority to exemplify key religious teachings or beliefs.

4.5 Part (d) questions

Part (d) questions are worth 12 marks. They assess AO2 and test students’ ability to analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief, including their significance and influence. Note that for questions 1(d) and 3(d) for Paper 1 and 1(d) for Papers 2, 3 and 4, the (d) questions are out of 15: 12 marks are awarded for the response with a further 3 marks awarded for SPaG (see Section 4.6 below for more details on SPaG).

Part (d) questions follow a similar format and will ask students to:

- Evaluate a statement, considering arguments for and against.

The question will then have some supporting bullets to direct students’ responses to the question. These bullets will always ask students to refer to religious teachings and reach a justified conclusion, but, depending on the content, could ask students to refer to:

- different [assessed religion] points of view
- non-religious points of view
- relevant philosophical arguments
- relevant ethical arguments.

Each of the content bullet points in the specification clearly states when each of these elements needs to be covered.

Evaluate part (d) questions

These questions ask students to evaluate a statement.

The command word ‘evaluate’ requires students to interpret a given stimulus to consider different viewpoints and perspectives relating to the importance of significance of a particular aspect of a religion or belief. Students will also be required to deconstruct the information or issue at hand, by constructing logical chains of reasoning and making connections between the elements of the question. Arguments must be justified by the appraisal of evidence leading to a supported conclusion. Therefore, for this response, students are required to read the question carefully and evaluate the statement with arguments for and against, with reference to the stated bullets. They must also reach a conclusion.

These questions will be marked using a levels-based mark scheme. The one below is for Paper 1: Catholic Christianity, Q4(d) in response to the question:

“Paintings help a Catholic understand their relationship to God”

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against. In your response you should:

- *refer to Catholic teachings*
- *refer to different Christian points of view*
- *reach a justified conclusion*

For levels-based mark schemes, the indicative content is provided first, followed by the levels.

Indicative content

Question number	Answer	Mark
1(d)	<p>AO2 12 marks,</p> <p>Candidates must underpin their analysis and evaluation with knowledge and understanding. Candidates will be required to demonstrate thorough knowledge and understanding as well as accuracy of religion and belief when responding to the question and in meeting AO2 descriptors</p> <p>AO2</p> <p>Arguments for the statement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most Catholic churches have Stations of the Cross which give a visible form the final hours of Jesus’ life; they therefore help Catholics to have a clearer sense of Jesus’ suffering; this makes them more grateful for the sacrifice he made to atone for sins • Paintings often portray images and stories from the Bible; they help worshippers understand God’s dealings with humanity; and they come to understand more clearly the history of salvation • The Catechism of the Catholic Church encourages all sacred art which reflects the glory of God and which draws the worshipper to adoration and prayer <p>Arguments against the statement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In most religious images God is depicted as male; this can reinforce gender stereotypes in religion; some Christian women could find that undermines their commitment to the Gospel • Many paintings represent an image of God: some Christians believe that to represent God is to lessen his greatness; a Christian’s sense of awe before God could be lessened as a consequence • Some of the images represented in paintings may seem traditional and alien to modern society; some people may struggle to connect with the concept of God portrayed; they may therefore confuse a person’s faith rather than enhance it. <p>Accept any other valid responses</p> <p>Candidates who do not consider different viewpoints within the religious tradition (as instructed in the question) cannot achieve marks beyond Level 2</p>	12

4. Assessment guidance

The marking instructions indicate that students need to analyse and evaluate, but also that they must use accurate religious knowledge to underpin their evaluation. The indicative content is split into two sections: examples of the arguments students may give *for* the statement and examples of the arguments students may give *against* the statement.

Note that students who do not discuss different viewpoints or non-religious viewpoints (as instructed in the question) cannot achieve marks beyond Level 2. Therefore, students should be advised to read the question and the bullet points very carefully before they begin their response.

Levels

Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable response
Level 1	1-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information/issues are identified and make superficial connections among a limited range of elements in the question, underpinned by isolated elements of understanding of religion and belief [including any relevant philosophical and/or ethical arguments]. Judgements are supported by generic arguments to produce a conclusion that is not fully justified.
Level 2	4-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Superficial connections are made among many, but not all, of the elements in the question, underpinned by a limited understanding of religion and belief [including any relevant philosophical and/or ethical arguments]. Judgements of a limited range of elements in the question are made. Judgements are supported by an attempt to appraise evidence, much of which may be superficial, leading to a conclusion that is not fully justified.
Level 3	7-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deconstructs religious information/issues, leading to coherent and logical chains of reasoning that consider different viewpoints. These are underpinned by an accurate understanding of religion and belief [including any relevant philosophical and/or ethical arguments]. Connections are made among many, but not all, of the elements in the question. Constructs coherent and reasoned judgements of many, but not all, of the elements in the question. Judgements are supported by the appraisal of evidence, some of which may be superficial, leading to a partially justified conclusion.
Level 4	10-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critically deconstructs religious information/issues, leading to coherent and logical chains of reasoning that consider different viewpoints. These are underpinned by a sustained, accurate and thorough understanding of religion and belief [including any relevant philosophical and/or ethical arguments]. Connections are made among the full range of elements in the question. Constructs coherent and reasoned judgements of the full range of elements in the question. Judgements are fully supported by the comprehensive appraisal of evidence, leading to a fully justified conclusion.

- The first green bullet focuses on the chains of reasoning and the consideration of the different viewpoints of the question. It also assesses the students' understanding of religion and belief.

- The second blue bullet focuses on the use of evidence and use of reasoned judgements in relation to the question as well as the quality of the conclusion.
- The green and blue bullets shown above are in all part (d) mark schemes. In mark schemes for questions which require students to refer to relevant philosophical and/ethical arguments, the text in red is also assessed.

4.6 Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar

As with the previous GCSE RS specifications, there is a requirement for all awarding bodies to assess students' use of spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPaG) and use of specialist terminology. This will contribute a minimum of 5% of marks towards the overall weighting of each paper.

The marks are allocated as follows:

Full course

- Paper 1: 3 marks for Q1d and Q3d – 6 marks in total for the paper
- Papers 2,3 and 4: 3 marks for Q1d – 3 marks in total for each paper

This is assessed via the grid shown below:

Marks		Descriptor
0	No marks awarded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The candidate writes nothing • The candidate's response does not relate to the question • The candidate's achievement in SPaG does not reach the threshold performance level, for example, errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar severely hinder meaning
1 mark	Threshold performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidates spell and punctuate with reasonable accuracy • Candidates use rules of grammar with some control of meaning and any errors do not significantly hinder meaning overall. • Candidates use a limited range of specialist terms as appropriate
2 marks	Intermediate performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidates spell and punctuate with considerable accuracy • Candidates use rules of grammar with general control of meaning overall • Candidates use a good range of specialist terms as appropriate
3 marks	High performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidates spell and punctuate with consistent accuracy • Candidates use rules of grammar with effective control of meaning overall • Candidates use a wide range of specialist terms as appropriate

5. 9–1 grading

Ofqual has provided the following information about the new 9–1 grading:

- 1 is the lowest, anchored to grade G: 'The bottom of grade 1 will be aligned with the bottom of grade G.'
- 7 will be anchored to grade A: 'Broadly the same proportion of students will achieve a grade 7 and above as currently achieve an A and above.'
- 9 is the highest, for the top 3% or so: 'For each examination, the top 20 per cent of those who get grade 7 or above will get a grade 9 – the very highest performers.'
- 4 will be anchored to grade C: 'Broadly the same proportion of students will achieve a grade 4 and above as currently achieve a grade C and above.'
- 5 will be set between C and B: 'Grade 5 will be positioned in the top third of the marks for a current Grade C and bottom third of the marks for a current Grade B.'
- The diagram below provides a visual representation of this information.

