

# Edexcel Religious Studies

## Guidance on using the Specification-

### About this resource

This resource aims to emphasise the importance of the specification. It will help you to understand key parts within the specifications, for both GCSE and A level, and will additionally outline how to use textbooks effectively, to support your teaching practice.



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# Edexcel Religious Studies

## Guidance on using the Specification

### What is a specification?

A specification is a description and guide to the qualification. It explains the options available within each qualification and helps you plan to teach the course. It is a comprehensive list of exactly what needs to be taught and what will be assessed.

**All questions will be based on what is written within this specification – if it is not in the specification, it will not be examined.**

The specification is **not** designed to limit teaching. It is up to teachers to determine how this content is taught and it is recommended that they use their own professional discretion to use additional sources of wisdom and/or introduce scholars as they choose.

It should also be noted that any relevant content will be credited within exam questions. If a specific source of wisdom or scholar is not mentioned in the specification but used appropriately within their answer, candidates will be credited accordingly.

# Edexcel Religious Studies

## Guidance on using the Specification

### How are exam questions generated?

**Exam questions will only be generated using the specification.** These are written by our senior Religious Studies team, many of whom were involved in writing the specification.

The exam questions are written to assess candidate understanding of the content provided within the specification. **If it is not in the specification, it will not make up an exam question.** Any content within the specification can and will be covered over the life cycle of the qualification so it is important to make sure that all areas have been taught.

Not everything within the specification will be included in each examination series; a sample of topics will be assessed in any given exam series and all elements of the specification will be covered over the lifetime of the qualification.

Examiners are looking to award marks and not include any trick questions; they are not looking to catch candidates out. Many of our senior team are teachers or ex-teachers who have been trained in assessment methodology and are looking to create a fair way to assess candidates. When writing exam questions, they start with the specification as their basis, but they will also consider how questions in previous series performed so that they can constantly improve the papers.

## Specification

Within all areas of study, the significance and importance should be explored throughout all sections as indicated in the overview.

The significance and importance of the various beliefs and practices to Catholics today, should be explored throughout the four sections.

### The structure of both specifications

#### Section 1: Beliefs and Teachings

Students should have an understanding of:

- |      |  |
|------|--|
| 1.1  | The Trinity: the nature and significance of the Trinity as expressed in the Nicene Creed; the nature and significance of the oneness of God; the nature and significance of each of the Persons individually: God as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; how this is reflected in worship and belief in the life of a Catholic today.   |
| 1.2  | Biblical understandings of God as a Trinity of Persons; the nature and significance of God as a Trinity of Persons, including reference to the baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3: 13–17) and historical development of the doctrine of the Trinity, including reference to the First Council of Nicaea and the First Council of Constantinople.  |
| 1.3  | Creation: the nature and significance of the biblical account of Creation, including Genesis 1–3; and how it may be understood in divergent ways in Christianity, including reference to literal and metaphorical interpretations; the significance of the Creation account for Catholics in understanding the nature and characteristics of God, especially as Creator, benevolent, omnipotent and eternal. |
| 1.4  | The significance of the Creation account in understanding the nature of humanity: the nature and significance of the nature of humanity being created in the image of God, including reference to Genesis 1–3 and divergent understandings of humanity's relationship with Creation (dominion and stewardship); the implications of these beliefs for Catholics today.                                       |
| 1.5  | The Incarnation: Jesus as incarnate Son, the divine Word, including John 1, both fully God and fully human; the scriptural origins of this belief, including John 1:1–18 and its importance for Catholics today.   |
| 1.6  | The events in the Paschal Mystery: Catholic teachings about the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, including reference to Luke 24; the redemptive efficacy of these events and their significance for Catholics today.  |
| 1.7  | The significance of the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus for Catholic beliefs about salvation and grace, including John 3:10–21 and Acts 4:8–12; the implications and significance of these events for Catholic practice today.  |
| 1.8* | Catholic beliefs about eschatology: life after death.  |

judgment, resurrection and ascension of Jesus; 2 Corinthians 5:1–10; divergent Christian beliefs about life after death, with reference to purgatory and the nature of resurrection; why belief in life after death is important for Catholics today.

Students should recognise that Christianity is one of the many religious traditions in Great Britain which include Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism. This knowledge may be applied throughout the assessment of the specified content. Students should compare and contrast two areas of belief and practice within Christianity with one of these religions practised in Great Britain:

- Beliefs about the afterlife and their significance (1.6)\*
- The practice and significance of worship (2.1)\*.

Each area of study has sections. This is an example of section 1: *Catholic Christianity Beliefs and teachings*

The section is divided into 8 bullet points. All exam questions and mark schemes are based on these bullet points only. Avoid relying on text books or social media.

The asterisk is to identify a question which will require knowledge and understanding between the two religions you have studied.

You will see there are eight clearly labelled sub-sections. These determine the wording, and questions on the exam papers, and therefore indicate what you should teach.

**If it's not on the specification, it won't be asked about.**

The asterisk identifies an area where there could be a question which requires knowledge and understanding between the two religions studied within that topic. It may be that candidates will be asked to compare worship or life after death between the two.

## Specification: Sources of wisdom

### (c) Sources of wisdom and authority

#### Section 1: Beliefs and Teachings

Students should have an understanding of:

1.1	The Trinity: the nature and significance of the Trinity as expressed in the Nicene Creed; the nature and significance of the oneness of God; the nature and significance of the Persons individually: God as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; how this is reflected in worship and belief in the life of a Catholic today.
1.2	Biblical understandings of God as a Trinity of Persons: the nature and significance of God as a Trinity of Persons, including reference to the baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3: 13–17) and historical development of the doctrine of the Trinity, including reference to the First Council of Nicaea and the First Council of Constantinople.
1.3	The nature and significance of the biblical account of Creation, including Genesis 1–3; and how it may be understood in divergent ways in Christianity, including reference to literal and metaphorical interpretations; the significance of the Creation account for Catholics in understanding the nature and characteristics of God, especially as Creator, benevolent, omnipotent and eternal.
1.4	The significance of the Creation account in understanding the nature of humanity: the nature and significance of humanity being created in the image of God, including reference to Genesis 1–3 and divergent understandings of humanity's relationship with Creation (dominion and stewardship); the implications of these beliefs for Catholics today.
1.5	The Incarnation: Jesus as incarnate Son, the divine Word, including John 1, both fully God and fully human; the scriptural origins of this belief, including John 1:1–18 and its importance for Catholics today.
1.6	The events in the Paschal Mystery: Catholic teachings about the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, including reference to Luke 24; the redemptive efficacy of these events and their significance for Catholics today.
1.7	The significance of the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus for Catholic beliefs about salvation and grace, including John 3:10–21 and Acts 4:8–12; the implications and significance of these events for Catholic practice today.
1.8*	Catholic beliefs about eschatology: life after death; the nature of resurrection, hell and purgatory, including reference to John 11:17–27 and 2 Corinthians 5:1–10; divergent Christian beliefs about life after death, with reference to purgatory; the nature of resurrection; why belief in life after death is important for Catholics today.

The Creed

The Bible

The Catechism

Some sources of wisdom are identified on the specification. They are to support teaching and questions will **not** be directly asked about these.

They are also not the only references that can be used; any recognised source of authority within the tradition that you study will be credited if correctly applied within the response.

## Evaluation question: Guidance around bullet points

The bullet points under 12-mark (d) evaluation questions guide candidates as to what they need to include in their answer. This is linked to the specification content.

### For example

***Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.***

***In your response you must:***

- ***refer to (chosen religion) teachings***
- ***reach a justified conclusion.***

This question could link to any area of the specification.

## Evaluation question: Guidance around bullet points

The bullet points under 12-mark (d) evaluation questions guide candidates as to what they need to include in their answer. This is linked to the specification content.

### For example

***Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.***

***In your response you must:***

- ***refer to (chosen religion) teachings***
- ***refer to different (chosen religion) points of view***
- ***reach a justified conclusion***

As identified on the specification,

<b>1.7</b>	al-Qadr: the nature and importance of Predestination for Muslims; how al-Qadr and human freedom relates to the Day of Judgement, including reference to Sahih Al-Bukhari 78: 685; <b>divergent understandings of predestination in Sunni and Shi'a Islam</b> ; the implications of belief in al-Qadr for Muslims today.
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This question (and the bullet points below it) should be recognised by the candidate as telling them that they must provide **two points of view from within the religion** they have studied.

This is the '**divergent views**' indicated on the specification bullet point.



## Evaluation question: Guidance around bullet points

The bullet points under 12-mark (d) evaluation questions guide candidates as to what they need to include in their answer. This is linked to the specification content.

### For example

***Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.***

***In your response you must:***

- ***refer to (chosen religion) teachings***
- ***refer to non-religious points of view***
- ***reach a justified conclusion.***

As identified on the specification,

Miracles as proof of the existence of Allah: the nature and importance of miracles in Islam; the Qur'an as a miracle including Surah 17: 84–89; examples of miracles; reasons why they might lead to belief in the existence of Allah; Muslim responses to non-religious arguments (including atheist and Humanist) which maintain that miracles can be scientifically explained and provide no proof that Allah exists; divergent understandings of what miracles show about the nature of Allah for Muslims.

This question (and the bullet points below it) indicates the discussion of arguments should be between the religious teachings/viewpoint and non-religious views. This is indicated on the specification bullet point.



## Evaluation question: Guidance around bullet points

The bullet points under 12-mark (d) evaluation questions guide candidates as to what they need to include in their answer. This is linked to the specification content.

### For example

***Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.***

***In your response you must:***

- ***refer to (chosen religion) teachings***
- ***refer to relevant ethical arguments /or refer to relevant philosophical arguments***
- ***reach a justified conclusion***

As identified on the specification,

<b>2.5</b>	Christian teaching about family planning and regulation of births: divergent Christian attitudes about contraception and family planning, including teachings about the artificial methods of contraception by some Protestant Churches and the Catholic Church, with reference to <i>Humanae Vitae</i> ; different non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) attitudes to family planning and the application of ethical theories, such as situation ethics, and Christian responses to them.
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This question (and the bullet points below it) indicates that during the discussion of arguments, one ethical or philosophical argument should be referred to. This is indicated on the specification bullet point.

# AS and A Level

## Specification layout

### The structure of the A level specification

Topics	What students need to learn
1 Philosophical issues and questions	<p>1.1 Design Argument</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Inductive reasoning, <i>a posteriori</i> types of arguments, interpretation of experience.</li><li>b) Types of order and regularity, role of analogy, cumulative effect of evidence, anthropic principle, regularities of co-presence and regularities of succession.</li><li>c) Strengths and weaknesses of Design Arguments: probability rather than proof, alternative interpretations, including evolution and deism. Challenges to the argument.</li><li>d) Philosophical language and thought through significant concepts and the works of key thinkers, illustrated in issues in the philosophy of religion.</li></ul> <p>With reference to the ideas of W Paley and D Hume.</p> <p>1.2 Cosmological Argument</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Inductive reasoning, <i>a posteriori</i> types of arguments.</li><li>b) Principle of sufficient reason, explanation, interpretation of experience, movement, cause and effect, contingency, infinite regress, first cause, necessary existence, Kalam version.</li><li>c) Strengths and weaknesses of Cosmological Arguments: probability rather than proof, brute fact, debates about infinite regress, necessary existence and God as a necessary being. Challenges to the argument.</li><li>d) Philosophical language and thought through significant concepts and the works of key thinkers, illustrated in issues in the philosophy of religion.</li></ul> <p>With reference to the ideas of Aquinas and D Hume, I Kant.</p> <p>1.3 Ontological Argument</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) <i>A priori</i> compared to <i>a posteriori</i> types of arguments, deductive reasoning, not evidence based but understanding of concept 'God' as an analytic proposition.</li><li>b) Definitions of 'God', necessary existence, aseity.</li><li>c) Strengths and weaknesses of the Ontological Arguments: concept of proof compared to probability, debates about 'existence' and predicates. Challenges to the argument.</li><li>d) Philosophical language and thought through significant concepts and the works of key thinkers, illustrated in issues in the philosophy of religion.</li></ul> <p>With reference to the ideas of Anselm and B Russell.</p>

Each paper is split into six topic areas

Each topic areas is then divided into sections.

Each topic area is then divided into sub topics.

All exam questions and mark schemes are based on these bullet points only.

Each paper is divided into six topic areas.

These are then divided into sections (e.g., Design argument, Cosmological argument).

These are then divided into sub-topics or specific points that need to be studied.

The content and terminology within these sections direct teachers to exactly what needs to be taught and will be used to make up the exam questions and mark schemes.

**If it is not in the specification, then it will not be examined in a question.**

# AS and A Level

## Reference to Scholars - Contributors

Within the specification content, most boxes include the expression: '*with reference to the ideas of....*'

This indicates key contributors in relation to specific content areas.

For example, in the extract below from Paper 1, W Paley and D Hume are listed as contributors:

1.1	<p>Design Argument</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Inductive reasoning, <i>a posteriori</i> types of arguments, interpretation of experience.</li><li>b) Types of order and regularity, role of analogy, cumulative effect of evidence, anthropic principle, regularities of co-presence and regularities of succession.</li><li>c) Strengths and weaknesses of Design Arguments: probability rather than proof, alternative interpretations, including evolution and deism. Challenges to the argument.</li><li>d) Philosophical language and thought through significant concepts and the works of key thinkers, illustrated in issues in the philosophy of religion.</li></ul> <p>With reference to the ideas of W Paley and D Hume.</p>
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These scholars support a candidate's knowledge and understanding of the topic. They do not represent compulsory reading.

Unless required elsewhere in the specification there will not be a question naming these scholars specifically.

Additional relevant contributors will be credited if deployed appropriately.

# AS and A Level

## Reference to Scholars – Specific seminal figures

Some topics specify names of seminal figures within the specification content, and these may be mentioned in questions.

For example, the extract below from Paper 4 Option E Judaism, specifies commentary by Rashi:

2.2	<p>The development of Rabbinic Judaism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) <b>Commentary by Rashi</b> and his pupils on Jewish scriptures in order to add explanations to clarify the text, and at times referred to contemporary events; commentary on the Babylonian Talmud and continued influence via tosafots.</li><li>b) Judah Halevi: unity between God and the People of Israel; piyyutim poems of the diaspora for festivals and Sabbath and his Songs of Zion; emphasis on religious experience and value of prophecy. Supremacy of the divine word in nature and the Law. Rejected Aristotelian philosophy, Christianity and Islam, presenting views to support Judaism.</li><li>c) Historical and religious context of these figures; nature of their authority and role of interpretation; influence on development of Rabbinic Judaism and significance in terms of emphases on selected Jewish beliefs.</li></ul> <p>With reference to the ideas of P Chaim and H Halkin.</p>
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Rashi is specifically named within the specification content and not *'in reference to'* so could be specifically asked about in a question.

In the extract below from the AS samples assessment materials for this option, the example question names Rashi.

- 3 Assess the significance of **Rashi** and his school for the development of Judaism.

# AS and A Level

## Reference to Scholars – A level Anthology

Texts and scholars from the Anthology are used in compulsory questions at A level and these scholars can be named in questions.

The context in which these texts could be studied is indicated by bracketed numbers in the detailed content, for example (4) in the extract below for Paper 1 Philosophy.

These extracts are not exclusive to the topic areas under which they appear; candidates will need to be able to apply these extracts across any suitable topic.

5.2	A comparison between a critic of religion, Bertrand Russell, and a religious believer, Frederick Copleston (4)
	a) The context of the writings of Russell and Copleston and the way these ideas are applied to issues in religion and belief, including the argument from contingency and religious experience.

This means that candidates could be asked a question specifically about these scholars and their writings.

# Textbooks

## The benefits and potential pitfalls of textbooks

Many textbooks can be used to support our qualifications and help teachers to teach both the content and the skills required. These were written as support resources and can be incredibly useful.

However, it should be noted that textbooks are not the specification; they may use different technical vocabulary, additional sources of wisdom, scholars or content which the publisher feels will enrich the subject.

It is important again to note that content **will only be examined if it is specifically mentioned in the specification**.

Additionally, exam questions and techniques written within many textbooks are the author's suggestions and will not necessarily follow the guidelines adhered to by our senior examining team. Assessment materials within textbooks is not included as part of the endorsement process.

The best place to locate suitable exam questions is by reviewing the past papers, mark schemes and examiner reports available on our website for each distinct qualification or by looking at advice specifically published by us.

# Textbooks

## Endorsement of textbooks

### Endorsement process for textbooks

We have numerous resources by a variety of publishers that are endorsed by Pearson. Any publisher is free to apply to have their resources endorsed.

To find out more about this process, please visit our website:

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/published-resources/about-endorsed-resources.html>

It is important to note that the process focuses on teaching and learning content. Many endorsed resources will offer assessment guidance and support, including sample and practice questions, tasks or assignments.

However, this publisher-produced assessment content has not been 'approved' in any way.



# Understanding how questions are assessed

## Where to find guidance

The best place to find guidance on our assessment is from the guidance documents on our website:

### **Mark Schemes:**

Each exam paper is accompanied by a mark scheme which indicates how each question is marked and includes some indicative content that may be included.

### **Examiner reports:**

Following each exam series, the principal examiner writes a report analysing the performance of each question, highlighting the strengths and any misconceptions and areas for development.

### **CPD events:**

Pearson Edexcel run CPD events which help you to understand how answers are assessed.

### **Guidance documents:**

There are a range of guidance documents on our website regarding assessment requirements, skills and to support teaching.

# Further Support for Edexcel Religious Studies



## Contact the Religious Studies team:

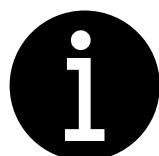
Email us: [teachingreligiousstudies@pearson.com](mailto:teachingreligiousstudies@pearson.com)

Call us: UK: 0344 463 2535 (Mon – Fri, 9am – 5pm GMT)

Contact us online: <https://bit.ly/2KLSNT0>

Book a Teams meeting with the subject advisor:  
<https://bit.ly/3rEVLx8>

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## Stay informed:

Sign up for subject updates: <https://bit.ly/2G6mmfe>

View the latest subject update online: <https://bit.ly/3zsnxjL>



## Access Course Materials:

Visit the Pearson Edexcel GCSE Religious Studies website for course materials:

- Specification and sample assessments: ([GCSE\(A\)/GCSE\(B\)/GCE](#))
- Exam materials: ([GCSE\(A\)/GCSE\(B\)/GCE](#))
- Teaching and learning materials: ([GCSE\(A\)/GCSE\(B\)/GCE](#))



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