

**Preparing for A Level
Religious Studies:
A student guide**

General Overview

Component 1: World Faith	Component 2: Philosophy	Component 3: Ethics
33.3%	33.3%	33.3%
There is a choice of 6 world faiths. We choose Christianity.	Philosophy of religion is different to standard philosophy. Look at the different in the Open Learning section.	Ethics is associated with character and how we make moral decisions. Its far broader than the 'ethics' unit at GCSE.

Overview - Component 1

Christianity

You will begin the course looking at the figure of Jesus: who he was, the story of his birth, his life, his death and Resurrection. We then move on to teachings about Jesus and God in general such as the Trinity. We look at the Bible and its use by Christians as, amongst other things, a source of moral teaching. We investigate key moral principles associated with Christianity as well as the importance of Baptism and how festivals such as Easter and Christmas are celebrated around the world.

In year 2 we look at modern developments in Christianity around wealth, migration and feminist theology. We consider how Christians have worked together through the ecumenical movement and how religious experience and the Church in Latin America has shaped the worldwide Christian faith. We also consider whether Britain can be classed as a Christian country and the challenges to religious belief today.

You do not need to be a Christian or believe in God but must be able to develop an understanding of Christian beliefs and teachings and address the challenges to them.

Overview - Component 2

Philosophy of Religion

Students will begin by looking at the challenges to belief in God, especially evil and suffering. We consider different arguments for the existence of God from design, causation and language. We also look at religious experience and how it may support or challenge belief in God.

You do not need to be a Christian or believe in God; we expect an inquisitive mind and a desire to learn, discuss and reflect above anything else.

You will then be expected to study the challenges of Freud, Jung and Dawkins to modern belief in God and evaluate each of these approaches. You will study evidence for and against miracles as well as the use of philosophical language through the work of Wittgenstein, AJ Ayer, Swinburne and Aquinas.

Overview - Component 3

Ethics

Ethics is about human character and behaviour. We start by looking at some ethical theories like natural law (St Thomas Aquinas), utilitarianism (Bentham & Mill), situation ethics (Joseph Fletcher), virtue theory (Aristotle) and apply these to modern ethical dilemmas such as abortion, euthanasia, sexual relationships and animal welfare.

In year 2 we look at modern developments in natural law. We also consider to what extent we are free and if any of our behaviour is predetermined, referring to theology, psychology, science and philosophy. We also look at the language of ethics and what we mean when we use statements such as 'murder is wrong' and 'telling the truth is always good.'

AO1 – Knowledge & Understanding

AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:

- religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching
- influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies
- cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice
- approaches to the study of religion and belief.

A02 – Analysis & Evaluation

A02: Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.

In the context of this assessment objective:

- analyse means deconstructing information and/or issues to find connections between them and to provide logical chains of reasoning;
- evaluate means appraising and/or making judgements with respect to information and/or issues; and
- analysis and evaluation should draw on underpinning knowledge and understanding. Aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief refers to the subject content in an overarching sense, encompassing, as appropriate, the study of religion, textual approaches and philosophical and ethical views. The emphasis here is on the learner constructing coherent and reasoned responses, supported by evidence.

AO1 – Knowledge & Understanding samples

Strand/ element	Assessment Objective AO1 Strands/Elements	Example Command words	Examples taken from the Sample Assessment Materials
1	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching.	Explain Examine Outline Apply	<p>Examples taken from the Sample Assessment Materials</p> <p><u>(AO1 Strands 1, 2, 3 & 4)</u></p> <p>Unit 1: Option A - An Introduction to the Study of Christianity</p> <p>5. (a) Compare the ways in which the Eastern Orthodox and Western Christian churches celebrate Easter.</p>
2	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies.	Explain Examine Outline Apply	<p>Unit 1: Option C - An Introduction to the Study of Judaism</p> <p>5. (a) Examine different views about the importance of mitzvot found in Orthodox and Hasidic Judaism.</p>
3	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice.	Explain Examine Compare	<p><u>(AO1 Strands 1,2 and 4)</u></p>
4	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including approaches to the study of religion and belief.	Explain... Examine... Outline.... Apply	<p>Unit 1: Option B - An Introduction to the Study of Islam</p> <p>4. (a) Explain Muslim beliefs about the role of prophets within Islam before the time of Muhammad.</p> <p>Unit 2: Section A - An Introduction to Religion and Ethics</p> <p>1. (a) Apply Aquinas' Natural Law to the ethical issue of voluntary euthanasia.</p>

A02 – Analysis & Evaluation samples

Strand/ element	Assessment Objective AO2 Strands/Elements	Command words used:	An example taken from the Sample Assessment Materials
1	Analyse aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.	Evaluate this view	<p>Both AO2 elements (1 and 2) will always be assessed together.</p> <p>Unit 2: Section A An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion.</p> <p>4. (b) 'Irenaeus type theodicies have never been successful in responding to the problem of evil.' Evaluate this view.</p>
2	Evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.	or Evaluate the view that ...	

Exam Board Links

- A Level Religious Studies Homepage

https://www.eduqas.co.uk/en/qualifications/religious-studies-as-a-level/#tab_overview

- A Level Exam Question Command Word Glossary

<https://www.eduqas.co.uk/media/i01dsjkr/wjec-gce-religious-studies-glossary.pdf>

There are a lot of words but by the end of the course you will have a strong understanding of all of them and be able to use them with authority.

- A Level Specifications

<https://www.eduqas.co.uk/media/kfvcf3ky/gce-religious-studies-specification-from-2016-wales.pdf>

Open Learning Tasks

Work through these tasks (you will need to sign up first) to develop your understanding of some key areas of the course:

1. Introduction to Philosophy

<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/philosophy/introducing-philosophy/content-section-0?active-tab=description-tab>

2. Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion

<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/religious-studies/introducing-the-philosophy-religion/content-section-0?active-tab=description-tab>

3. Ethics in Science

<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/science-maths-technology/ethics-science/content-section-0?active-tab=description-tab>

Netflix Tasks

Watch the following episodes and consider what the key messages or ideas behind each are:

1. The Good Place: Making decisions based on pain and pleasure:

<https://www.netflix.com/watch/80209705?trackId=13752289&tctx=0%2C4%2Ce6dd1efe-20b4-45ec-9c45-1bb3f38c744e-8778756%2C%2C>

2. Story of God: Why does evil exist?

<https://www.netflix.com/watch/80217118?trackId=13752289&tctx=0%2C4%2C93969e54-bde6-475b-a85a-7a1217585133-71321018%2C%2C>

3. Louis Theroux: Christianity

<https://www.netflix.com/watch/70222216?trackId=13752289&tctx=0%2C0%2Cce511e64-eeef-4c3a-add8-8b8645c3c9c8-542881594%2C%2C>

Some YouTube videos...

Explore these at your leisure. Some become more relevant as we progress through the course:

- **Mr McMillan RS Revision:**

<https://www.youtube.com/user/MrMcMillanREvis>

- **Ted Talks:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yesE4mcv4CM>

- **Christianity revision:**

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-ksG_f_1I4V2BGqWuamSw

- **Bishop Barron on themes in Christianity:**

<https://www.youtube.com/user/wordonfirevideo>

- **Richard Dawkins Foundation**

<https://www.youtube.com/user/richarddawkinsdotnet>

Some TEDTalks

These are usually wonderful, with plenty to stimulate your questioning and reasoning skills.

Elizabeth Loftus – how reliable is your memory?

Dan Gilbert – why we make bad decisions

Richard Dawkins – militant atheism

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie – We should all be feminists

Damon Horowitz – Philosophy in prison

There are loads of talks on here, so use the search engine to find topics that interest you. Practise note-taking; write notes as you listen, just as you would if you were listening to a real-life lecture, and practise the skill of jotting down key points at speed. Ask yourself questions when you get to the end: what were the speaker's key messages? Do you agree with the speaker? What might someone who disagreed say, and what might their reasons be?

^^The above is taken from a resource by Libby Ahluwalia, the author of some fantastic course books.

Wider Watching & Listening

Regularly accessing these resources will help develop your wider knowledge and understanding of some key areas within Religious Studies.

- Religious Studies revision - <http://www.rsrevision.com/contents/index.htm>
- Philosophy, Ethics & Christianity podcast - <https://thepanpsycast.com/>
- BBC Ethics - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/guide/>
- The Moral Maze (BBC Radio 4) - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qk11/episodes/player>
- In Our Time (BBC Radio 4) - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qykl/episodes/player>
- Everyday Ethics (BBC Radio Ulster) - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02nrsmh/episodes/player>
- Philosophy Magazine (try the quizzes) – <https://philosophersmag.com>

Wider Reading

You can access some of these at the back of F15 although cheap copies can be found on Amazon Marketplace amongst other places.

- **The Puzzle of God, Peter Vardy**

Covers a lot of Component 2 in a way designed for A level students.

- **The Puzzle of Ethics, Peter Vardy**

Covers a lot of Component 3 in a way designed for A level students.

- **The Puzzle of Christianity, Peter Vardy**

A relatively recent book which is an essential pre-read before starting Component 1.

- **Causing Death & Saving Lives, Jonathan Glover**

An older book that contains some basic considerations when thinking about life and death issues such as abortion and euthanasia.