

Teacher's Handbook

GCSE Religious Studies C (Religion and Belief in Today's World)

OCR GCSE in Religious Studies C: J622/J122

This handbook is designed to accompany the OCR GCSE Religious Studies C specification for teaching from September 2009.

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Introduction

OCR is offering a new GCSE Pilot in Religious Studies for first teaching in September 2009.

The opportunity has been taken to act upon the 2007 OFTED report for Religious Studies and create a specification that addresses some of the issues raised.

There are three key areas of update from the current Religious Studies specifications of 1930/1030 and 1931/1031: updated and relevant content, a focus on developing students personal, learning and thinking skills, and flexible assessment, so you can choose the best learning approach.

We want to make the introduction of this new GCSE as easy for you to manage as possible.

The main changes are:

- The opportunity has been taken to bring course content up to date
- Examinations provide opportunity for extended writing and more varied question types
- All GCSEs, including this pilot meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Our approach is to provide consistency across all our GCSEs by offering the flexibility that unitised qualifications bring, allowing teaching and assessment to be either a linear or unitised fashion.

OCR offers a range of support materials to accompany this Pilot, these have been developed following extensive research and consultation with teachers, stakeholders and subject consultants. They have been designed to help save you time when preparing to teach the new specification and to support you whilst teaching.

It is important to make the point that this Teacher Handbook plays a secondary role to the specifications themselves. The GCSE Religious Studies C Specification is the document on which assessment is based: it specifies what content and skills need to be covered. At all times therefore, the Teacher Handbook should be read in conjunction with the specification. If clarification on a particular point is sought, then that clarification must be found in the specification itself.

Subject specific guidance

Summary for Teachers

- Over a period of time the specification will be covered
- On any one paper there will not necessarily be full coverage of the unit
- On any one paper there will be questions on each of the three key areas in each unit
- In each unit that is examined candidates will have to answer two questions, each from a different key area
- On any one paper questions will not necessarily follow a particular order
- The question paper may include more than one question from a sub section of the unit
- Teachers should take careful note of the text in the specification at the beginning of each unit as this indicates the breadth of coverage of the unit
- In some of the units there will be a focus upon a country, or a religion or an issue
- Teachers should encourage candidates to compare and contrast religions and beliefs and practices between countries, between communities and between individuals
- Because of the large choice of topics within the specification the questions asked will be of a general nature related to the themes
- There are no compulsory questions and candidates will be able to make a free choice of questions within the rubrics and advice set on individual papers.
- Questions in examinations for this specification will now have an equal allocation of marks (50%) to cover the Assessment Objectives 1 (Demonstrate Knowledge, Understanding and Analysis) and 2 (Use of Evidence, Evaluation and Argument). Candidates will still be required to employ skills of description and analysis using appropriate knowledge and understanding of the religions which they are studying.
- Teachers will find the OCR materials relating to assessment valuable in assisting candidates to develop the required skills, especially the level descriptors.
- Candidates will be rewarded for any appropriate response to a reasonable interpretation of a question, even if the candidate's interpretation is different from that which was anticipated when the question was set.
- On some papers it may be necessary to use terms that are not inclusive eg "man" as a word to describe humankind/angel etc.
- One of the outcomes of this course may be to help young people find their own spirituality. It certainly will support spiritual and social development, as well as moral and cultural development
- Students should understand the close relationship between politics and religion, both can divide and unite people in causes and beliefs
- It is explicit in the specification that religion today has negative aspects or practises which may be controversial. Students should be aware of and explore the origins of these, they should also be able to differentiate between an extremist or minority view and those of the mainstream
- This also allows students to meet the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabi
- Study of the units will help students who progress to further higher level studies. Their general knowledge from this course will be enhanced

Christianity:

If biblical quotations appear on the examination paper, they will be from the NIV translation.

Hinduism:

If scriptural quotations appear on the examination paper, they will be from *Hindu Scriptures*, trans & ed R C Zaehner, Everyman's Library.

Islam:

Teachers should note that in the specification and question papers the phrase 'peace be upon him' after the name of the Prophet will appear as the Arabic colophon .

If Qur'anic quotations appear on the examination paper, they will be from *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, Yusuf Ali Abdullah, Amana Publications.

Judaism:

Teachers should note that in the specification and question papers the divine name will appear as G-d.

If scriptural quotations appear on the examination paper, they will be from the *Tanach*, Mesorah Publications.

Unit B611: Religion and Belief in the Modern World

In this unit reference to beliefs refers to philosophies as well as religious beliefs that have resulted in secular beliefs e.g. Humanism or Atheism. This unit is looking at how religions and belief systems impact upon communities and individuals in the last sixty years. The studying of the key areas will help students understand that the issues that affect the freedoms of individuals and communities are complex and variable.

There is a desire to make learning links with other disciplines such as sociology, history, politics, global citizenship and current events. Such subject areas, along with the study of religions and philosophies will help candidates appreciate how all affect mankind.

Candidates choose two key areas to answer questions from.

Key area 1 provides students with an opportunity to consider secularisation and the role of religion within a choice of societies. Six countries are offered on the specification and teachers should choose two countries to explore the roles of religion, secularisation and atheism in relation to broad issues such as the law and education. Religious specific content will vary according to the countries selected.

The second key area looks at a range of issues that impact upon people of faith. They are expected to show an understanding of the issue and how it results in different practices from individuals and communities of the same faith. Students will come to know and understand that there are many different attitudes and solutions to these issues. Teachers should choose one of the three issues and then look down the column to see the content to be studied. For example if candidates are studying 'Impact of laws on personal freedoms' they will need to study 'Gender issues, Violations of human rights and Travel around the world.'

There is an opportunity in key area 3 to carry out a more in depth study of two religious movements, whose origins may date back centuries, but which have emerged in more recent times. Students should be aware of particulars relating to the movements selected such as beliefs and practises but should also take the opportunity to consider wider issues such as the impact of the movement on society and whether the movement should be referred to as a religion. These are examples of issues that will enable students to form the justified opinions required by AO2.

Candidates should reflect upon the importance of religion and politics to people. They should consider how much religion and politics contribute towards community cohesion.

Candidates will be expected to understand where appropriate where and why there are differences between people within the same faith. They will need to understand the tensions this can cause between people of faiths and within the faiths.

There is a contemporary feel for this paper to encourage students to find out more about the world they live in and increase their interest in current affairs and more recent history.

Unit B612: Religion, Politics and Culture in Britain

In this unit the main focus is upon the historical and continuing influence of Christianity upon Britain. Students studying this unit will have an in depth understanding and knowledge of the influence of the Christian religion, in particular, and how the religion has impacted upon British culture, identity and politics.

Students should appreciate the rich tapestry of British culture and identity and its links with the Christian heritage.

Candidates will be expected to know and understand the relationship between the Church and The State and understand the influence of the Church of England upon education.

As Britain has become more multi-faith, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural candidates will be expected to know and analyse the impact of this on British identity. Candidates should understand how and why Britain has changed. It is to be hoped that the more informed candidates are about how Britain came to be multi- ethnic, cultural and faith in this country it will prevent ignorance and prejudice and promote community cohesion.

Candidates will have to study all the indicative content from one of the three key themes in at least two of the key areas if entering this unit.

The first key area presents opportunities for educational visits, for multi-sensory or experiential learning or for cross-curricular links for those students studying relevant subjects such as art, music or history. Students can meaningfully be encouraged to identify Christian themes and ideas even in films, books etc that are not overtly related to the faith – ideas of good and evil and a ‘chosen’ saviour of humanity are central to the ‘Harry Potter’ novels for example - and this can be used to form opinions on how far Christianity and Christian attitudes pervade British culture in the 21st century.

Key area 2 could be related to ideas introduced in Unit B611 about politics and secularism. Students will have the opportunity to consider whether the description ‘a Christian country’ is relevant for Britain today by exploring the role and significance of religion in British politics. Key area 3 focuses on the foundations of modern multi-cultural Britain.

Unit B613: The Individual

The focus of this unit is the individual, rather than community. It considers how philosophical concepts associated with religion and beliefs affect, influence and impact upon individuals. It is important that students are able to meaningfully consider the nature of 'Truth' as a concept and to relate this to claims made about the truth by religions. Areas where students should be encouraged to form their own views and opinions include the question of whether any truth claim is 'relative' (dependent on the viewpoint of the person making or responding to it), whether there can be any objective truths and the implications for religions if there are.

In Key area 1 candidates need to study what is meant by truth, how we find the truth and share it with others in two different religions or beliefs. Students' general knowledge of the world and events will be enhanced. Candidates will also have their own opportunities to reflect upon their own beliefs and values.

Because of the rise of fundamentalism in religions around the world more recently, key area 2 explores how religions fundamentalism has affected individuals within societies in many different ways. It examines what is meant by fundamentalism. The link between interpretations of sacred writings with fundamentalism is examined. The first two key areas are closely connected and students could benefit from exploring the relationships between them.

The final key area 3 in this unit is looking at how religion and beliefs affect everyday living, especially in family life families in reality. It explores the interface between religion, culture, customs and traditions, in particular where there are differences of practice between generations.

Unit B614: Community Cohesion and the Individual

Candidates taking this unit are encouraged to explore two key areas that affect religions and beliefs which in turn could impact upon the individual and communities. In an attempt to help candidates understand the importance of community cohesion locally, nationally and globally three different areas i.e. human rights, the growth of technology and citizenship have been identified. Candidates can choose to study two of these areas but are expected to cover all three sub sections from one or more religions. It raises questions about the balance between rights and values for individuals, with those of society, and with religious beliefs and practices. Every person is unique yet part of a community.

In order for people to live alongside one another, human rights have been developed, as well as moral and religious codes to live by. In key area 1 candidates will look at the interface between individual human rights and the values and beliefs systems that are for the good of the community. Communities evolve with each generation. It is hoped that this unit will help candidates appreciate the ever changing nature of religions and beliefs and their impact upon people, as individuals and communities and how to balance these with human rights. Where there have been tensions it is important for students to understand how people have tried to reconcile these differences.

There are strong links with the study of PHSE and Citizenship.

The key area 2 is about how religion and beliefs inform debates about new technologies. The rate of change and technology is so fast that it is difficult for the law to keep up with the changes. Many moral questions arise from new technologies. Candidates will need to consider how relevant are the religious and secular views about such technologies in today's society.

In key area 3 it explores what is meant by 'Citizenship' and compares and contrasts it to 'religious citizenship'. Some people of a faith believe that the next life is more important than this life on earth and live accordingly. Others believe the two are related and then there are those who think this is the only life so people should make the best of it. It looks at the responsibility of being a global citizen, a local citizen and an individual and one's responsibility.

Other forms of Support

In order to help you implement the new GCSE Religious Studies C Specification effectively, OCR offers a comprehensive package of support. This includes:

- Schemes of Work and Lesson Plans
- Text books, which whilst not written specifically for this specification can be of use when teaching certain aspects of it
- A comprehensive list of the resources that are out there for teaching each topic on the specification

OCR Training

Launch Meeting / Get Started... successful delivery of Religious Studies C

This full-day event will run on the 4th of June 2009 and will look at the specification in more depth, give advice on delivery and go through everything that you will need to be able to teach this to your candidates.

Visit www.ocr.org.uk for more details.

Mill Wharf Training

Additional events are also available through our partner, Mill Wharf Training. It offers a range of courses on innovative teaching practice and whole-school issues - www.mill-wharf-training.co.uk.

e-Communities

Over 70 e-Communities offer you a fast, dynamic communication channel to make contact with other subject specialists. Our online mailing list covers a wide range of subjects and enables you to share knowledge and views via email.

Visit <https://community.ocr.org.uk>, choose your community and join the discussion!

Interchange

OCR Interchange has been developed to help you to carry out day to day administration functions online, quickly and easily. The site allows you to register and enter candidates online. In addition, you can gain immediate a free access to candidate information at you convenience. Sign up at <https://interchange.ocr.org.uk>

Frequently Asked Questions

How many religions do I study?

This is a matter of choice for centres. To some extent centres will wish to take into account the interests, aptitudes and faith commitments of their students. There are advantages in focussing study through one particular faith as this may clarify and simplify learning for some students. Approaching this specification through the study of two or three separate religions is educationally valid in allowing candidates to appreciate the importance of religion in a broader context.

Candidates must study two religions, there is no maximum number.

Can I study any two units for short course?

Yes

Can I do Controlled Assessment?

No, assessment is by written examination.

How is the course assessed?

Assessment is by written examination. Candidates taking a Short Course in Religious Studies C will take two written examinations from any two units.

Candidates taking a Full course in Religious Studies C will take four written examinations from the four units. Each examination paper requires candidates to choose two separate questions from the topic areas involved. Each paper is one hour in length. Specimen papers and mark-schemes are available for inspection and teachers are strongly advised to read them.

The examination papers allow equal weighting for AO1 and AO2.

How does Short Course compare to Full Course GCSE?

Both types of candidates may study units in exactly the same ways; they are assessed in exactly the same ways and to the same standard. The difference is in the quantity of material the candidates are required to study; the Short Course is made up of any **two** units and the Full Course is made up of **four** units. Results from both courses are awarded on the scale A*-G.

Centres must enter candidates for the correct qualification certification (J622 for Full Course, J122 for Short Course.)

What can this study progress to?

This specification provides candidates with an appropriate foundation for study at Advanced Subsidiary GCE and Advanced GCE in Religious Studies, particularly for the OCR specifications at these levels.