

Glossary of Terms

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.

Religions in Today's World
GCSE Religious Studies
OCR

Glossary of Terms

The following are a list of general words used in the specification that you might find helpful to understanding the thinking behind the some of the terminology in the specification.

Arranged Marriages	A formal union in which the couple are brought together through the arrangements of other family members, usually parents.
Asceticism	The practice of self denial or self control as a means of religions attainment through discipline.
Carbon Footprints	A term used to measure the impact of our activities on the environment and, in particular, climate change. It relates to the amount of greenhouse gases produced in our day-to-day lives through burning fossil fuels for electricity, heating and transportation etc.
Community Cohesion	A common vision and shared sense of belonging for all groups in society; that which brings communities together.
Conversion	A sharp turn-around, a change of religious commitment by someone.
Cults	A term that refers to many non-traditional religious movements. More recently this term has been employed in controversies against 'new religious movements' in the West.
Culture	Culture is that which refines and educates society through a range of activities, such as traditional and modern performing and visual arts, literature and historical heritage. It is the product of human capabilities and a way of life for a group or society. It can provide the means of identity of a group e.g. youth culture or pop culture.
Ecumenical Movement	20th Century movement to recover unity among many different churches of Christendom.
Fundamentalism	This is a movement or an attitude in which strict and literal adherence to a set of basic principles or beliefs is stressed. It can refer to those who return to what they believe to be the fundamental truth and practices of a religion. In the 20 th century Protestantism, there was an increased emphasis upon the literal interpretation of the Bible. Fundamentalists usually react against

	modernity, fighting with features that will best reinforce their identity. They desire to keep their movement together, building defences around its boundaries and try to keep others at some distance.
Humanism	Humanism is an approach to life based on reason and our common humanity, recognising that moral values are properly founded on human nature and experience alone. A system that puts human interests paramount over and above spiritual or supernatural existences.
Inter-faith	Ways in which the different faiths relate between one another.
Multi-cultural	A society in which many different cultures are evident.
Multi-faith society	A society in which many different religious faiths are represented and practised.
Mysticism	Practices and systems of thought that lie beyond description, which is distinguished from metaphysical systems. It refers to spiritual techniques that involve the apprehension of a transcendent state, entity or person. Sometimes it refers to the direct intuition or experience of God. A mystic person is one who not merely accepts the beliefs and practices of a religion but they have a first hand knowledge of the divine through a greater or lesser degree of experience of God.
Pluralism	Modern view associated with the 20 th century in which it is accepted that all religions are equal to each other; one is not better or more superior than the other but that it is up to the individual to discover which path they wish to take and follow.
Proselytising	An attempt to try and bring people from one religion to another or to convert to a religion.
Religious Movements	Key changes in a religion or emergence of new religions that happen throughout history of time that result in different beliefs and/or practices.
Religious Pluralism	A society in which there are many different religions.
Revealed truth	The disclosure or communication of truths which would not otherwise be known through the natural order but come from a source other than human.
Scientism	The view of scientists i.e. that all phenomena can be rationally explained.

Secular Philosophies	This is the study of wisdom and ideas connected exclusively to the present world not to things spiritual; to knowledge of the causes and laws of all phenomenon, the science of being as being.
Secular State	A process of government that does not belong to or represent a particular religion, though individuals within that government may be free to practice any religion they want State run with no influence of religion in its laws or governance. Religion and politics are completely separated, often making religion optional.
Secularisation	The process of becoming secular. i.e. separating that which belongs to religion from that which is not religions by nature. It's a movement in which people lose confidence in spiritual or supernatural accounts of the cosmos, whereby religion loses its influence on society; where there is an indifference to religion; no concern for religion; or possibly an opposition to it. In Europe it can refer to the times when religion became less paramount in the social and political life and there was an increase in the age of Rationalism and Enlightenment.
Stereotypes	Labelling or thinking of everyone or everything in the same cast or mould.
Universal values	This refers to anything that everyone agrees is of worth, esteem or high regard.