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# GCSE RELIGIOUS STUDIES A

(8062)

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## **Specification**

For teaching from September 2016 onwards  
For exams in 2018 onwards

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Version 1.1 December 2016



# Contents

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<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1	Why choose AQA for GCSE Religious Studies A	5
1.2	Support and resources to help you teach	5
<b>2</b>	<b>Specification at a glance</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1	Subject content	8
2.2	Assessments	8
<b>3</b>	<b>Subject content</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1	Component 1: The study of religions: beliefs, teachings and practices	10
3.2	Component 2: Thematic studies	21
<b>4</b>	<b>Scheme of assessment</b>	<b>29</b>
4.1	Aims and learning outcomes	29
4.2	Assessment objectives	30
4.3	Assessment weightings	30
4.4	Assessment structure	30
4.5	Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPaG)	32
<b>5</b>	<b>General administration</b>	<b>33</b>
5.1	Entries and codes	33
5.2	Overlaps with other qualifications	33
5.3	Awarding grades and reporting results	33
5.4	Re-sits and shelf life	34
5.5	Previous learning and prerequisites	34
5.6	Access to assessment: diversity and inclusion	34
5.7	Working with AQA for the first time	34
5.8	Private candidates	35

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## Are you using the latest version of this specification?

- You will always find the most up-to-date version of this specification on our website at [aqa.org.uk/8062](https://www.aqa.org.uk/8062)
- We will write to you if there are significant changes to this specification.

# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Why choose AQA for GCSE Religious Studies A

Our GCSE covers a range of the major world religions, six contemporary ethical themes and two textual studies, ensuring you and your students have a diverse choice of intriguing subjects to explore.

Students will be challenged with questions about belief, values, meaning, purpose and truth, enabling them to develop their own attitudes towards religious issues.

Students will also gain an appreciation of how religion, philosophy and ethics form the basis of our culture. They will develop analytical and critical thinking skills, the ability to work with abstract ideas, leadership and research skills. All these skills will help prepare them for further study.

Highlights include:

- the full course is co-teachable with our GCSE Religious Studies: Short course
- experienced subject experts and teachers helped us create a clear and straightforward approach to assessment
- our question papers enable students of all abilities to show what they know.

You can find out all about our Religious Studies A qualification at [aqa.org.uk/religious-studies](https://www.aqa.org.uk/religious-studies)

## 1.2 Support and resources to help you teach

We've worked with experienced teachers to provide you with a range of resources that will help you confidently plan, teach and prepare for exams.

### Teaching resources

Visit [aqa.org.uk/8062](https://www.aqa.org.uk/8062) to see all our teaching resources. They include:

- schemes of work
- specimen questions and marked exemplars
- resources listed for each of the religions and themes
- step-by-step guidance for assessment
- guidance to new content for each religion
- training courses to help you deliver AQA GCSE Religious Studies
- subject expertise courses for all teachers, from newly-qualified teachers who are just getting started to experienced teachers looking for fresh inspiration.

### Preparing for exams

Visit [aqa.org.uk/8062](https://www.aqa.org.uk/8062) for everything you need to prepare for our exams, including:

- past papers, mark schemes and examiners' reports
- specimen papers and mark schemes for new courses
- Exampro: a searchable bank of past AQA exam questions
- exemplar student answers with examiner commentaries.

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## Analyse your students' results with Enhanced Results Analysis (ERA)

Find out which questions were the most challenging, how the results compare to previous years and where your students need to improve. ERA, our free online results analysis tool, will help you see where to focus your teaching. Register at [aqa.org.uk/era](https://aqa.org.uk/era)

For information about results, including maintaining standards over time, grade boundaries and our post-results services, visit [aqa.org.uk/results](https://aqa.org.uk/results)

## Keep your skills up-to-date with professional development

Wherever you are in your career, there's always something new to learn. As well as subject-specific training, we offer a range of courses to help boost your skills.

- Improve your teaching skills in areas including differentiation, teaching literacy and meeting Ofsted requirements.
- Prepare for a new role with our leadership and management courses.

You can attend a course at venues around the country, in your school or online – whatever suits your needs and availability. Find out more at [coursesandevents.aqa.org.uk](https://coursesandevents.aqa.org.uk)

## Get help and support

Visit our website for information, guidance, support and resources at [aqa.org.uk/8062](https://www.aqa.org.uk/8062)

You can talk directly to the religious studies subject team

E: [religiousstudies@aca.org.uk](mailto:religiousstudies@aca.org.uk)

T: 0161 957 3881

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# 2 Specification at a glance

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This qualification is linear. Linear means that students will sit all their exams at the end of the course.

## 2.1 Subject content

Students must take assessments in the following two components in the same series:

- 1 [Component 1: The study of religions: beliefs, teachings and practices](#) (page 10)
- 2 [Component 2: Thematic studies](#) (page 21)

## 2.2 Assessments

There are two routes through this specification. Students should enter either Route A or Route B, depending on whether they study the textual studies themes.

In Route A students must answer questions on two specified religions in Component 1A (Christianity and Catholic Christianity are prohibited combinations), and four from six religious, philosophical and ethical studies themes in Component 2A.

In Route B students must answer questions on either Christianity or Catholic Christianity plus one religion from the other five specified religions in Component 1B, and two from six religious, philosophical and ethical studies themes plus both textual studies themes in Component 2B.

Themes A–F are examined in Component 2A; Themes A–H are examined in Component 2B.

## Component 1: The study of religions: beliefs, teachings and practices

### What's assessed

Beliefs, teachings and practices of **two** from:

- Buddhism
- Christianity
- Catholic Christianity
- Hinduism
- Islam
- Judaism
- Sikhism.

Christianity and Catholic Christianity is a prohibited combination.

### How it's assessed

- Written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes
- 96 marks (plus 5 marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPaG))
- 50% of GCSE

### Questions

Each religion has a common structure of two five-part questions of 1, 2, 4, 5 and 12 marks.

Each religion is marked out of 48.

## + Component 2: Thematic studies

### What's assessed

**Either** four religious, philosophical and ethical studies themes **or** two religious, philosophical and ethical studies themes and two textual studies themes.

Religious, philosophical and ethical studies themes:

- Theme A: Relationships and families.
- Theme B: Religion and life.
- Theme C: The existence of God and revelation.
- Theme D: Religion, peace and conflict.
- Theme E: Religion, crime and punishment.
- Theme F: Religion, human rights and social justice.

Textual studies themes:

- Theme G: St Mark's Gospel – the life of Jesus.
- Theme H: St Mark's Gospel as a source of religious, moral and spiritual truths.

### How it's assessed

- Written exam: 1 hour 45 minutes
- 96 marks (plus 5 marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPaG))
- 50% of GCSE

### Questions

Each theme has a common structure of one five-part question of 1, 2, 4, 5 and 12 marks.

Each theme is marked out of 24.



# 3 Subject content

This specification covers the content laid down by the Department for Education (DfE) subject content for GCSE Religious Studies.

Students should consider different beliefs and attitudes to religious and non-religious issues in contemporary British society. They should be aware that the religious traditions of Great Britain are, in the main, Christian, and that religious traditions in Great Britain are diverse. They include Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism, as well as other religious and non-religious beliefs such as atheism and humanism. This knowledge may be applied throughout the assessment of the subject content.

## 3.1 Component 1: The study of religions: beliefs, teachings and practices

Students should study any two of the following:

- Buddhism
- Christianity
- Catholic Christianity
- Hinduism
- Islam
- Judaism
- Sikhism.

Christianity and Catholic Christianity is a prohibited combination.

### 3.1.1 Buddhism

Students should be aware that Buddhism is one of the diverse religious traditions and beliefs in Great Britain today and that the main religious tradition in Great Britain is Christianity. This knowledge may be applied throughout the assessment of the specified content.

Students should study the beliefs, teachings and practices of Buddhism specified below and their basis in Buddhist sources of wisdom and authority. They should be able to refer to scripture and/or sacred texts where appropriate. Some texts are prescribed for study in the content set out below and questions may be set on them. Students may refer to any relevant text in their answers and AQA will publish a list of appropriate texts as part of the supporting material for this specification. These additional texts will not be required for study, alternatives may be used, and questions will not be set on them.

Students should study the influence of the beliefs, teachings and practices studied on individuals, communities and societies.

Common and divergent views within Buddhism in the way beliefs and teachings are understood and expressed should be included throughout. Students may refer to a range of Buddhist perspectives in their answers, for example, Theravada, Mahayana, Zen and Pure Land. They must study the specific differences identified below.

### 3.1.1.1 Key beliefs

#### The Dhamma (Dharma)

- The concept of Dhamma (Dharma).
- The concept of dependent arising (paticcasamupada).
- The Three Marks of Existence:
  - anicca (impermanence)
  - anatta (no fixed self)
  - dukkha (unsatisfactoriness of life, suffering).
- The human personality, in the Theravada and Mahayana traditions:
  - Theravada: the Five Aggregates (skandhas) of form, sensation, perception, mental formations, consciousness
  - Mahayana: sunyata, the possibility of attaining Buddhahood and Buddha-nature.
- Human destiny:
  - different ideals in Theravada and Mahayana traditions: Arhat (a 'perfected person') and Bodhisattva ideals
  - Buddhahood and the Pure Land.

### 3.1.1.2 The Buddha and the Four Noble Truths

- The Buddha's life and its significance:
  - the birth of the Buddha and his life of luxury
  - the Four Sights: illness, old age, death, holy man (Jataka 075)
  - the Buddha's ascetic life
  - the Buddha's Enlightenment.
- The Four Noble Truths:
  - 1 suffering (dukkha) including different types of suffering
  - 2 the causes of suffering (samudaya); the Three Poisons, ignorance, greed and hate
  - 3 the end of craving (tanha), interpretations of nibbana (nirvana) and Enlightenment
  - 4 the Eightfold Path (magga) to nibbana/nirvana; the path as the Threefold Way: ethics (sila), meditation (samadhi) and wisdom (panna). Dhammapada 190–191.

### 3.1.1.3 Practices

#### Worship and festivals

- The nature, use and importance of Buddhist places of worship including temples, shrines, monasteries (viharas), halls for meditation or learning (gompas) and their key features including Buddha rupa, artefacts and offerings.
- Puja, the significance and role of puja/devotional ritual in the home and in the temple, including chanting, both as a devotional practice and as an aid to mental concentration, mantra recitation, use of malas.
- Meditation, the different aims, significance and methods of meditation:
  - Samatha (concentration and tranquillity) including mindfulness of breathing
  - Vipassana (insight) including zazen
  - the visualisation of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.
- The practice and significance of different ceremonies and rituals associated with death and mourning in Theravada communities and in Japan and Tibet.

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- Festivals and retreats and their importance to Buddhists in Great Britain today, including the celebrations, origins and significance of:
    - Wesak
    - Parinirvana Day.

### Buddhist ethics

- Ethical teaching:
  - kamma (karma) and rebirth
  - compassion (karuna)
  - loving kindness (metta).
- The five moral precepts:
  - do not take life
  - do not take what is not given
  - do not misuse the senses
  - do not speak falsehoods
  - do not take intoxicants that cloud the mind.
- The six perfections in the Mahayanan tradition:
  - generosity
  - morality
  - patience
  - energy
  - meditation
  - wisdom, including how the individual develops these perfections within themselves.

### 3.1.2 Christianity

Students should be aware that Christianity is one of the diverse religious traditions and beliefs in Great Britain today and that the main religious tradition in Great Britain is Christianity. This knowledge may be applied throughout the assessment of the specified content.

Students should study the beliefs, teachings and practices of Christianity specified below and their basis in Christian sources of wisdom and authority. They should be able to refer to scripture and/or sacred texts where appropriate. Some texts are prescribed for study in the content set out below and questions may be set on them. Students may refer to any relevant text in their answers and AQA will publish a list of appropriate texts as part of the supporting material for this specification. These additional texts will not be required for study, alternatives may be used, and questions will not be set on them.

Students should study the influence of the beliefs, teachings and practices studied on individuals, communities and societies.

Common and divergent views within Christianity in the way beliefs and teachings are understood and expressed should be included throughout. Students may refer to a range of different Christian perspectives in their answers including Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant. They must study the specific differences identified below.

### 3.1.2.1 Beliefs and teachings

#### Key beliefs

- The nature of God:
  - God as omnipotent, loving and just, and the problem of evil and suffering
  - the oneness of God and the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- Different Christian beliefs about creation including the role of Word and Spirit (John 1:1–3 and Genesis 1:1–3).
- Different Christian beliefs about the afterlife and their importance, including: resurrection and life after death; judgement, heaven and hell.

#### Jesus Christ and salvation

- Beliefs and teachings about:
  - the incarnation and Jesus as the Son of God
  - the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension
  - sin, including original sin
  - the means of salvation, including law, grace and Spirit
  - the role of Christ in salvation including the idea of atonement.

### 3.1.2.2 Practices

#### Worship and festivals

- Different forms of worship and their significance:
  - liturgical, non-liturgical and informal, including the use of the Bible
  - private worship.
- Prayer and its significance, including the Lord's Prayer, set prayers and informal prayer.
- The role and meaning of the sacraments:
  - the meaning of sacrament
  - the sacrament of baptism and its significance for Christians; infant and believers' baptism; different beliefs about infant baptism
  - the sacrament of eucharist (Holy Communion) and its significance for Christians, including different ways in which it is celebrated and different interpretations of its meaning.
- The role and importance of pilgrimage and celebrations including:
  - two contrasting examples of Christian pilgrimage: Lourdes and Iona
  - the celebrations of Christmas and Easter, including their importance for Christians in Great Britain today.

#### The role of the church in the local and worldwide community

- The role of the Church in the local community, including food banks and street pastors.
- The place of mission, evangelism and Church growth.
- The importance of the worldwide Church including:
  - working for reconciliation
  - how Christian churches respond to persecution
  - the work of **one** of the following: Catholic Agency For Overseas Development (CAFOD), Christian Aid, Tearfund.

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### 3.1.3 Catholic Christianity

Students should be aware that Catholic Christianity is one of the diverse religious traditions and beliefs in Great Britain today and that the main religious tradition in Great Britain is Christianity. This knowledge may be applied throughout the assessment of the specified content.

Students should study the beliefs, teachings and practices of Catholic Christianity specified below and their basis in Catholic Christian sources of wisdom and authority. They should be able to refer to scripture and/or sacred texts where appropriate. Some texts are prescribed for study in the content set out below and questions may be set on them. Students may refer to any relevant text in their answers and AQA will publish a list of appropriate texts as part of the supporting material for this specification. These additional texts will not be required for study, alternatives may be used, and questions will not be set on them.

Students should study the influence of the beliefs, teachings and practices studied on individuals, communities and societies.

Common and divergent views within Christianity in the way beliefs and teachings are understood and expressed should be included throughout. Students may refer to a range of Christian perspectives in their answers including Orthodox and Protestant. They must study the specific differences identified below.

#### 3.1.3.1 Beliefs and teachings

##### Key beliefs

- One God as a Trinity of persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as expressed in the Nicene Creed; the scriptural origins of this belief and its development in the Council of Nicaea.
- Creation: Biblical accounts of creation (Genesis 1 and 2) and their significance for an understanding of the nature of God, the dignity of human beings and of humanity's relationship with creation. Different Christian beliefs about creation.
- Incarnation: the belief in Jesus as incarnate Son, divine Word, both fully God and fully human and the scriptural origins of this belief.
- Redemption: the significance of the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus for Catholic beliefs about salvation and grace.
- Beliefs about life after death: resurrection, judgement, heaven, hell and purgatory.

##### The seven sacraments

- The meaning and significance of 'sacrament' and the importance of the sacramental nature of reality.
- The names, meanings and effects of the seven sacraments:
  - baptism
  - confirmation
  - reconciliation
  - anointing of the sick
  - matrimony
  - holy orders
  - the eucharist: its status as 'the source and summit of Christian life'; different Christian views about its meaning and importance.

### 3.1.3.2 Practices

#### Worship

- Prayer:
  - prayer as ‘the raising of the mind and heart to God’
  - formal prayers and informal prayer, including different views about their relative importance
  - the meaning and importance of the Lord’s Prayer.
- The role and importance of forms of popular piety including the Rosary and the Stations of the Cross.
- The role and importance of pilgrimage, including a study of one place of Roman Catholic pilgrimage, and different Christian views about the importance of pilgrimage.
- The funeral rite and its significance.

#### The work of the Church

- Catholic beliefs about the essential duty to ‘love our neighbour’ in concrete ways locally, nationally and globally and how these beliefs are reflected in:
  - Catholic social teaching including Gaudium et Spes paragraph 26
  - Catholic teaching on justice, peace and reconciliation
  - The work of Catholic agencies including CAFOD, Trocaire, Missio.
- The meaning and significance of mission and evangelism for Catholics today, globally and in Great Britain, both nationally and locally.
- The aims and importance of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (SVP).
- The aims and importance of either the Corrymeela community or Pax Christi.

### 3.1.4 Hinduism

Students should be aware that Hinduism is one of the diverse religious traditions and beliefs in Great Britain today and that the main religious tradition in Great Britain is Christianity. This knowledge may be applied throughout the assessment of the specified content.

Students should study the beliefs, teachings and practices of Hinduism specified below and their basis in Hindu sources of wisdom and authority. They should be able to refer to scripture and/or sacred texts where appropriate. Some texts are prescribed for study in the content set out below and questions may be set on them. Students may refer to any relevant text in their answers and AQA will publish a list of appropriate texts as part of the supporting material for this specification. These additional texts will not be required for study, alternatives may be used, and questions will not be set on them.

Students should study the influence of the beliefs, teachings and practices studied on individuals, communities and societies.

Common and divergent views within Hinduism in the way beliefs and teachings are understood and expressed should be included throughout. Students may refer to a range of different Hindu perspectives in their answers, including Shaivism and Vaishnavism. They must study the specific differences identified below.

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### 3.1.4.1 Beliefs and teachings

#### Ideas about the nature of God and existence

- Brahman: different Hindu understandings of brahman; ultimate reality as divine consciousness (nirguna) and manifestation of God in form (saguna); spiritual worlds.
- Different understandings of the three features of the divine:
  - everywhere, as non-personal (brahman)
  - within the heart
  - beyond, as a personal loving God
  - Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 391.
- How the divine presents:
  - the tri-murti (Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva)
  - male and female deities, including Ganesha, Lakshmi, Hanuman, Saraswati
  - the concept of avatara, including Krishna, Rama.
- Matter (prakriti); the three qualities (tri-guna); illusion (maya); cosmology (Rig Veda 10.129.6–7); the cycle of four ages; many worlds and their diverse inhabitants.

#### Beliefs about the nature of human life

- The concept of atman, as individual, eternal inner self, distinct from material mind and body.
- Cycle of birth and death (Samsara), moral action and reaction (the law of karma), and types of liberation (moksha).
- Individual free will and responses to suffering; knowledge and ignorance.
- Personal virtues including ahimsa, respect, empathy, mind/sense control, humility, love.
- The four aims of human life: dharma, artha, kama, moksha.
- The meaning of dharma; sanatana dharma; varnashrama dharma.

### 3.1.4.2 Practices

#### Worship and festivals

- Places of worship and their importance: home; temple; outdoors (such as shrines); the space of the heart
- Different forms of worship/meditation and their significance: havan, puja, arati, darshan, bhajan/kirtan, japa/mantra; key differences in worship in Shaivism and Vaishnavism and different Hindu views about the importance of worship.
- Focuses of worship and representations of the divine and their importance:
  - one God (personal or non-personal)
  - the many deities, guru and other elders
  - holy land, hills and rivers
  - sacred plants and animals
  - the murti as a representation of God.
- Sacred festivals and their importance for Hindus in Great Britain today, including the origins and meaning of:
  - Diwali
  - Holi.

## Lifestyle

- The four paths towards yoga (union with the divine), their differences and their importance:
  - action (karma yoga)
  - knowledge (jnana yoga)
  - meditation (astanga yoga)
  - devotion (bhakti yoga).
- Pilgrimage:
  - the role of pilgrimage
  - practices and purposes
  - sacred sites, including Varanasi
  - Kumbh Mela.
- The work and significance of:
  - Hindu environmental projects including ‘cow protection’ and their significance.
  - Charities that promote well-being, social inclusion and women’s rights.

### 3.1.5 Islam

Students should be aware that Islam is one of the diverse religious traditions and beliefs in Great Britain today and that the main religious tradition in Great Britain is Christianity. This knowledge may be applied throughout the assessment of the specified content.

Students should study the beliefs, teachings and practices of Islam specified below and their basis in Islamic sources of wisdom and authority. They should be able to refer to scripture and other writings where appropriate. Some texts are prescribed for study in the content set out below and questions may be set on them. Students may refer to any relevant text in their answers and AQA will publish a list of appropriate texts as part of the supporting material for this specification. These additional texts will not be required for study, alternatives may be used, and questions will not be set on them.

Students should study the influence of the beliefs, teachings and practices studied on individuals, communities and societies.

Common and divergent views within Islam in the way beliefs and teachings are understood and expressed should be included throughout. Students may refer to a range of different Muslim perspectives in their answers, including those from Sunni and Shi’a Islam. They must study the specific differences identified below.

#### 3.1.5.1 Beliefs and teachings

##### Key Beliefs

- The six articles of faith in Sunni Islam and five roots of Usul ad-Din in Shi’a Islam, including key similarities and differences.
- The Oneness of God (Tawhid), Qur’an Surah 112.
- The nature of God: omnipotence, beneficence, mercy, fairness and justice (Adalat in Shi’a Islam), including different ideas about God’s relationship with the world: immanence and transcendence.
- Angels, their nature and role, including Jibril and Mika’il.
- Predestination and human freedom and its relationship to the Day of Judgement.
- Life after death (Aakhirah), human responsibility and accountability, resurrection, heaven and hell.



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## Authority

- Prophethood (Risalah) including the role and importance of Adam, Ibrahim and Muhammad.
- The holy books:
  - Qur'an: revelation and authority
  - the Torah, the Psalms, the Gospel, the Scrolls of Abraham and their authority.
- The imamate in Shi'a Islam: its role and significance.

### 3.1.5.2 Practices

#### Worship

- Five Pillars of Sunni Islam and the Ten Obligatory Acts of Shi'a Islam (students should study the Five Pillars and jihad in both Sunni and Shi'a Islam and the additional duties of Shi'a Islam).
- Shahadah: declaration of faith and its place in Muslim practice.
- Salah and its significance: how and why Muslims pray including times, directions, ablution (wudu), movements (rak'ahs) and recitations; salah in the home and mosque and elsewhere; Friday prayer (Jumma); key differences in the practice of salah in Sunni and Shi'a Islam, and different Muslim views about the importance of prayer.

#### Duties and festivals

- Sawm: the role and significance of fasting during the month of Ramadan including origins, duties, benefits of fasting, the exceptions and their reasons, and the Night of Power, Qur'an 96:1–5.
- Zakah: the role and significance of giving alms including origins, how and why it is given, benefits of receipt, Khums in Shi'a Islam.
- Hajj: the role and significance of the pilgrimage to Makkah including origins, how hajj is performed, the actions pilgrims perform at sites including the Ka'aba at Makkah, Mina, Arafat, Muzdalifah and their significance.
- Jihad: different understandings of jihad: the meaning and significance of greater and lesser jihad; origins, influence and conditions for the declaration of lesser jihad.
- Festivals and commemorations and their importance for Muslims in Great Britain today, including the origins and meanings of Id-ul-Adha, Id-ul-Fitr, Ashura.

## 3.1.6 Judaism

Students should be aware that Judaism is one of the diverse religious traditions and beliefs in Great Britain today and that the main religious tradition in Great Britain is Christianity. This knowledge may be applied throughout the assessment of the specified content.

Students should study the beliefs, teachings and practices of Judaism specified below and their basis in Jewish sources of wisdom and authority. They should be able to refer to scripture and/or sacred texts where appropriate. Some texts are prescribed for study in the content set out below and questions may be set on them. Students may refer to any relevant text in their answers and AQA will publish a list of appropriate texts as part of the supporting material for this specification. These additional texts will not be required for study, alternatives may be used, and questions will not be set on them.

Students should study the influence of the beliefs, teachings and practices studied on individuals, communities and societies.

Common and divergent views within Judaism in the way beliefs and teachings are understood and expressed should be included throughout. Students may refer to a range of different Jewish perspectives in their answers, for example, Orthodox, Reform and Liberal Judaism. They must study the specific differences identified below.

### 3.1.6.1 Beliefs and teachings

#### Key beliefs

- The nature of God:
  - God as one
  - God as Creator
  - God as Law-Giver and Judge, loving and merciful.
- The divine presence (Shekhinah).
- Beliefs about life after death, including judgement and resurrection.
- The nature and role of the Messiah, including different views on the role and importance of the Messiah.

#### The Covenant and the mitzvot

- The promised land and the Covenant with Abraham, Genesis 12:1–3.
- The Covenant at Sinai and its importance including the role of Moses and the Ten Commandments, Exodus 20:1–17.
- Key moral principles including justice, healing the world, charity and kindness to others.
- The importance of the sanctity of human life, including the concept of ‘saving a life’ (Pikuach Nefesh).
- The relationship between free will and the 613 mitzvot.
- Mitzvot between man and God and mitzvot between man and man, including the difference between them and their importance.

### 3.1.6.2 Practices

#### The synagogue and worship

- The synagogue and its importance.
- The design and religious features of synagogues including reading platform (bimah), ark (aron hakodesh), ever burning light (ner tamid) and associated practices; differences between Orthodox and Reform synagogues.
- Public acts of worship including:
  - synagogue services in both Orthodox and Reform synagogues
  - the significance of prayer, including the Amidah, the standing prayer.
- Shabbat in the home and synagogue and its significance.
- Worship in the home and private prayer.
- The written law (Tenakh) and the oral law (Talmud), and their study, use and significance in daily life.

#### Family life and festivals

- Rituals and their significance:
  - ceremonies associated with birth including Brit Milah.
  - Bar and Bat Mitzvah
  - the marriage ceremony
  - mourning rituals.
- Dietary laws and their significance, including different Jewish views about their importance.
  - kosher and trefah
  - separation of milk and meat.

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- Festivals and their importance for Jews in Great Britain today, including the origins and meaning of:
    - Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur
    - Pesach.

### 3.1.7 Sikhism

Students should be aware that Sikhism is one of the diverse religious traditions and beliefs in Great Britain today and that the main religious tradition in Great Britain is Christianity. This knowledge may be applied throughout the assessment of the specified content.

Students should study the beliefs, teachings and practices of Sikhism specified below and their basis in Sikh sources of wisdom and authority. They should be able to refer to scripture and/or sacred texts as appropriate. Some texts are prescribed for study in the content set out below and questions may be set on them. Students may refer to any relevant text in their answers and AQA will publish a list of appropriate texts as part of the supporting material for this specification. These additional texts will not be required for study, alternatives may be used, and questions will not be set on them.

Students should study the influence of the beliefs, teachings and practices studied on individuals, communities and societies.

Common and divergent views within Sikhism in the way beliefs and teachings are understood and expressed should be included throughout. Students may refer to a range of Sikh perspectives in their answers, for example to the perspective of sahajdhari and amritdhari Sikhs and the different emphases in different texts. They must study the specific differences identified below.

#### 3.1.7.1 Beliefs and teachings

##### Key beliefs

- The nature of God as expressed in the Mool Mantra: the content and significance of the Mool Mantra, Guru Granth Sahib (GGS) 1a.
- God as Creator, including different aspects of God's relationship with creation:
  - God shown in and through the universe
  - God as separate from the universe.
- The nature of human life as an opportunity to unite with God, including the development of Sikh virtues such as wisdom, truthful living, justice, temperance, self-control, patience, courage, humility, contentment.
- Beliefs in karma and rebirth, and the aim of mukti; the meaning of mukti, including the different aspects of mukti – positive and negative.
- The five stages of liberation (five khandas) and barriers to mukti (illusion, self-centredness, lust, anger, greed, worldly attachment, pride).
- The importance of being God-centred (gurmukh) rather than man-centred (manmukh) and the elimination of pride or ego (haumai).

##### Beliefs about the nature of human life

- Belief in the oneness of humanity and in the equality of all, including complete equality of women with men.
- The expression of the equality of all in:
  - the stories of the lives of Gurus, including Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh
  - the Guru Granth Sahib
  - in Sikhism today.

- Sewa: the importance and priority of service to others, including physical (tan), mental (man) and material (dhan).
- The role and importance of the sangat (religious community).

### 3.1.7.2 Practices

#### Worship and service

- Religious features of the gurdwara: design, furniture, and artefacts; the practices associated with these features and their importance, including the palki and takht.
- The role of the gurdwara within the Sikh community.
- The role of prayer in the home, GGS 305:4.
- The role and importance of the akhand path.
- The meaning and significance of langar as an expression of sewa.
- The significance of meditating on the name of God (nam japna) in daily life and in the gurdwara.

#### Festivals and lifestyle

- Festivals and their importance for Sikhs in Great Britain today, including the origins and significance of the following:
  - Vaisakhi (Baisakhi)
  - Divali
  - Gurpurbs, including Guru Nanak's birthday and differences in the way gurpurbs are celebrated in India and Great Britain.
- The importance of visiting Sikh historical gurdwaras, including the Golden Temple (Harimandir Sahib) in Amritsar.
- Birth and naming ceremonies including their meaning and significance.
- The initiation ceremony (Amrit Sanskar), including the meaning and importance of the Khalsa and the five Ks, and the different perspectives of sahadhari and amritdhari Sikhs.
- The significance and use of the names Singh and Kaur.

## 3.2 Component 2: Thematic studies

Students should study a total of four themes from Component 2. Students may study either four religious, philosophical and ethical studies themes **or** two religious, philosophical and ethical studies themes and two textual studies themes.

### 3.2.1 Religious, philosophical and ethical studies

Students should be aware of different religious perspectives on the issues studied within and/or between religious and non-religious beliefs such as atheism and humanism.

Students must also study religious, philosophical and ethical arguments related to the issues raised, and their impact and influence on the modern world.

Students will be expected to show their understanding of religion through the application of teachings from religion and beliefs. They will also be expected to make specific references to sources of wisdom and authority including scripture and/or sacred texts. They may refer to any relevant religious text such as the Pali Canon, the sermons of the Buddha, the Bible, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the Vedas and Upanishads, the Qur'an and Hadith, the Torah and Talmud, and the Guru Granth Sahib.

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As part of the supporting material for this specification, AQA will publish a list of appropriate texts; alternatives may be used and no questions will be set on them.

Students must demonstrate knowledge and understanding that:

- the religious traditions of Great Britain are, in the main, Christian
- the religious traditions in Great Britain are diverse.

Students may draw upon Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism, as well as other religions and non-religious beliefs such as atheism and humanism.

### 3.2.1.1 Theme A: Relationships and families

Students should study religious teachings, and religious, philosophical and ethical arguments, relating to the issues that follow, and their impact and influence in the modern world. They should be aware of contrasting perspectives in contemporary British society on all of these issues.

They must be able to explain contrasting beliefs on the following three issues with reference to the main religious tradition in Britain (Christianity) and one or more other religious traditions:

- Contraception.
- Sexual relationships before marriage.
- Homosexual relationships.

#### Sex, marriage and divorce

- Human sexuality including: heterosexual and homosexual relationships.
- Sexual relationships before and outside of marriage.
- Contraception and family planning.
- The nature and purpose of marriage.
- Same-sex marriage and cohabitation.
- Divorce, including reasons for divorce, and remarrying.
- Ethical arguments related to divorce, including those based on the sanctity of marriage vows and compassion.

#### Families and gender equality

- The nature of families, including:
  - the role of parents and children
  - extended families and the nuclear family.
- The purpose of families, including:
  - procreation
  - stability and the protection of children
  - educating children in a faith.
- Contemporary family issues including:
  - same-sex parents
  - polygamy.
- The roles of men and women.
- Gender equality.
- Gender prejudice and discrimination, including examples.

### 3.2.1.2 Theme B: Religion and life

Students should study religious teachings, and religious, philosophical and ethical arguments, relating to the issues that follow, and their impact and influence in the modern world. They should be aware of contrasting perspectives in contemporary British society on all of these issues.

They must be able to explain contrasting beliefs on the following three issues with reference to the main religious tradition in Britain (Christianity) and one or more other religious traditions:

- Abortion.
- Euthanasia.
- Animal experimentation.

#### The origins and value of the universe

- The origins of the universe, including:
  - religious teachings about the origins of the universe, and different interpretations of these
  - the relationship between scientific views, such as the Big Bang theory, and religious views.
- The value of the world and the duty of human beings to protect it, including religious teaching about stewardship, dominion, responsibility, awe and wonder.
- The use and abuse of the environment, including the use of natural resources, pollution.
- The use and abuse of animals, including:
  - animal experimentation
  - the use of animals for food.

#### The origins and value of human life

- The origins of life, including:
  - religious teachings about the origins of human life, and different interpretations of these
  - the relationship between scientific views, such as evolution, and religious views.
- The concepts of sanctity of life and the quality of life.
- Abortion, including situations when the mother's life is at risk.
- Ethical arguments related to abortion, including those based on the sanctity of life and quality of life.
- Euthanasia.
- Beliefs about death and an afterlife, and their impact on beliefs about the value of human life.

### 3.2.1.3 Theme C: The existence of God and revelation

Students should study religious teachings, and religious and philosophical arguments, relating to the issues that follow, and their impact and influence in the modern world. They should be aware of contrasting perspectives in contemporary British society on all of these issues.

They must be able to explain contrasting beliefs on the following three issues with reference to the main religious tradition in Britain (Christianity) and non-religious beliefs such as atheism and humanism:

- Visions.
- Miracles.
- Nature as general revelation.

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## Philosophical arguments for and against the existence of God

- The Design argument, including its strengths and weaknesses.
- The First Cause argument, including its strengths and weaknesses.
- The argument from miracles, including its strengths and weaknesses, and one example of a miracle.
- Evil and suffering as an argument against the existence of God.
- Arguments based on science against the existence of God.

## The nature of the divine and revelation

- Special revelation as a source of knowledge about the divine (God, gods or ultimate reality) including visions and one example of a vision.
- Enlightenment as a source of knowledge about the divine.
- General revelation: nature and scripture as a way of understanding the divine.
- Different ideas about the divine that come from these sources:
  - omnipotent and omniscient
  - personal and impersonal
  - immanent and transcendent.
- The value of general and special revelation and enlightenment as sources of knowledge about the divine, including:
  - the problems of different ideas about the divine arising from these experiences
  - alternative explanations for the experiences, and the possibility that the people who claimed to have them were lying or mistaken.

### 3.2.1.4 Theme D: Religion, peace and conflict

Students should study religious teachings, and religious, philosophical and ethical arguments, relating to the issues that follow, and their impact and influence in the modern world. They should be aware of contrasting perspectives in contemporary British society on all of these issues.

They must be able to explain contrasting beliefs on the following three issues with reference to the main religious tradition in Britain (Christianity) and one or more other religious traditions:

- Violence.
- Weapons of mass destruction.
- Pacifism.

### Religion, violence, terrorism and war

- The meaning and significance of:
  - peace
  - justice
  - forgiveness
  - reconciliation.
- Violence, including violent protest.
- Terrorism.
- Reasons for war, including greed, self-defence and retaliation.
- The just war theory, including the criteria for a just war.
- Holy war.
- Pacifism.

## Religion and belief in 21<sup>st</sup> century conflict

- Religion and belief as a cause of war and violence in the contemporary world.
- Nuclear weapons, including nuclear deterrence.
- The use of weapons of mass destruction.
- Religion and peace-making in the contemporary world including the work of individuals influenced by religious teaching.
- Religious responses to the victims of war including the work of one present day religious organisation.

### 3.2.1.5 Theme E: Religion, crime and punishment

Students should study religious teachings, and religious, philosophical and ethical arguments, relating to the issues that follow, and their impact and influence in the modern world. They should be aware of contrasting perspectives in contemporary British society on all of these issues.

They must be able to explain contrasting beliefs on the following three issues with reference to the main religious tradition in Britain (Christianity) and one or more other religious traditions:

- Corporal punishment.
- Death penalty.
- Forgiveness.

### Religion, crime and the causes of crime

- Good and evil intentions and actions, including whether it can ever be good to cause suffering.
- Reasons for crime, including:
  - poverty and upbringing
  - mental illness and addiction
  - greed and hate
  - opposition to an unjust law.
- Views about people who break the law for these reasons.
- Views about different types of crime, including hate crimes, theft and murder.

### Religion and punishment

- The aims of punishment, including:
  - retribution
  - deterrence
  - reformation.
- The treatment of criminals, including:
  - prison
  - corporal punishment
  - community service.
- Forgiveness.
- The death penalty.
- Ethical arguments related to the death penalty, including those based on the principle of utility and sanctity of life.



### 3.2.1.6 Theme F: Religion, human rights and social justice

Students should study religious teachings, and religious, philosophical and ethical arguments, relating to the issues that follow, and their impact and influence in the modern world. They should be aware of contrasting perspectives in contemporary British society on all of these issues.

They must be able to explain contrasting beliefs on the following three issues with reference to the main religious tradition in Britain (Christianity) and one or more other religious traditions:

- Status of women in religion.
- The uses of wealth.
- Freedom of religious expression.

#### Human rights

- Prejudice and discrimination in religion and belief, including the status and treatment within religion of women and homosexuals.
- Issues of equality, freedom of religion and belief including freedom of religious expression.
- Human rights and the responsibilities that come with rights, including the responsibility to respect the rights of others.
- Social justice.
- Racial prejudice and discrimination.
- Ethical arguments related to racial discrimination (including positive discrimination), including those based on the ideals of equality and justice.

#### Wealth and poverty

- Wealth, including:
  - the right attitude to wealth
  - the uses of wealth.
- The responsibilities of wealth, including the duty to tackle poverty and its causes.
- Exploitation of the poor including issues relating to:
  - fair pay
  - excessive interest on loans
  - people-trafficking.
- The responsibilities of those living in poverty to help themselves overcome the difficulties they face.
- Charity, including issues related to giving money to the poor.

## 3.2.2 Textual studies

Students entering for textual studies themes must also study [Christianity](#) (page 12) or [Catholic Christianity](#) (page 14) in Component 1. There is a separate entry code for this route (see [Entries and codes](#) (page 33)). Students electing for this route must study both textual studies themes (Themes G and H).

In studying these themes, students should be aware of the significance, importance and influence of St Mark's Gospel for individuals, communities and societies. They should understand how varied interpretations of the meaning of passages from St Mark's Gospel may give rise to diversity within Christian traditions and consider how far Christian and non-religious communities give authority to St Mark's Gospel, especially in relation to other sources of contemporary authority. Students should be able to show knowledge of the set texts for study and an understanding of their importance for Jesus, for his early followers and for people of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Students should be able to consider the authority of the Gospel and the relevance of Jesus' example and teaching.

### 3.2.2.1 Theme G: St Mark's gospel: the life of Jesus

#### The early ministry of Jesus

- John's preparation for Jesus' ministry: 1:1–8.
- Jesus' baptism and temptation: 1:9–13.
- The paralysed man: 2:1–12.
- Jairus' daughter: 5:21–24a, 35–43.
- The rejection at Nazareth: 6:1–6.
- The feeding of the five thousand: 6:30–44.

#### The later ministry of Jesus

- The conversation at Caesarea Philippi: 8:27–33.
- The transfiguration of Jesus: 9:2–9.
- Jesus' passion prediction: 10:32–34.
- The request of James and John: 10:35–45.
- Bartimaeus: 10:46–52.
- The entry into Jerusalem: 11:1–11.

#### The final days in Jerusalem

- The Last Supper: 14:12–26.
- Jesus in Gethsemane: 14:32–52.
- The trial before the Jewish authorities: 14:53, 57–65.
- The trial before Pilate: 15:1–15.
- The crucifixion and burial: 15:21–47.
- The empty tomb: 16:1–8.

#### Significance

- The titles Son of Man, Son of God, Christ (Messiah) and Son of David, including their meaning for 1<sup>st</sup> century Jews and Jesus.
- The significance for 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians of Jesus' understanding of the titles Son of Man, Son of God, Christ (Messiah) and Son of David.
- St Mark's portrayal of Jesus as a teacher and miracle worker, including contrasting views on the historicity of the miracle stories.
- Differing beliefs about the meaning of Jesus' words and actions at the Last Supper.
- Differing beliefs about the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection, and different explanations given for the empty tomb.
- Differing views on the authority of St Mark's Gospel relating to the life of Jesus in relation to the challenges posed by secular sources of contemporary authority.

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### 3.2.2.2 Theme H: St Mark's Gospel as a source of religious, moral and spiritual truths

#### The Kingdom of God

- Parable of the sower: 4:1–9, 14–20.
- Parable of the growing seed: 4:26–29.
- Parable of the mustard seed: 4:30–32.
- Jesus and the children: 10:13–16.
- The rich man: 10:17–27.
- The greatest commandment: 12:28–34.

#### Jesus' relationships with those disregarded by society

- The man with leprosy: 1:40–45.
- The call of Levi: 2:13–17.
- The Greek (Syro-Phoenician) woman's daughter: 7:24–30.
- The epileptic (demon-possessed) boy: 9:14–29.
- The widow at the treasury: 12:41–44.
- The anointing at Bethany: 14:1–9.

#### Faith and discipleship

- The call of the first disciples: 1:16–20.
- The woman with a haemorrhage: 5:24b–34.
- The mission of the Twelve: 6:7–13.
- The cost and rewards of discipleship: 8:34–38; 10:28–31.
- Peter's denials: 14:27–31, 66–72.
- The commission and ascension: 16:14–20.

#### Significance

- The significance and importance for Jesus, for the people of his day and for people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, of key events in the life of Jesus recorded St Mark.
- Different ways in which the Kingdom of God might be understood, including as a present reality and a future hope, and as a personal inner state and a community.
- Reasons for 1<sup>st</sup> century attitudes and those of Jesus to those disregarded by society.
- The significance and importance for Christians of Jesus' attitudes to those disregarded by the society of his day.
- Different views on the significance and importance for Jesus' disciples and for 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians of discipleship as seen in incidents relating to Jesus' disciples and in Jesus' teaching.
- Different views on the nature and importance of faith as seen in St Mark's Gospel.
- Differing views on the authority of Jesus' teaching as recorded by St Mark in relation to the challenges posed by secular sources of contemporary authority.

# 4 Scheme of assessment

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Find past papers and mark schemes, and specimen papers for new courses, on our website at [aqa.org.uk/pastpapers](http://aqa.org.uk/pastpapers)

This specification is designed to be taken over two years.

This is a linear qualification. In order to achieve the award, students must complete all assessments at the end of the course and in the same series.

GCSE exams and certification for this specification are available for the first time in May/June 2018 and then every May/June for the life of the specification.

All materials are available in English only.

Our GCSE exams in Religious Studies A include questions that allow students to demonstrate their ability to:

- apply knowledge and understanding of two religions
- apply knowledge and understanding of key sources of wisdom and authority including scripture and/or sacred texts, where appropriate, which support contemporary religious faith
- understand the influence of religion on individuals, communities and societies
- understand significant common and divergent views between and/or within religions and beliefs
- apply knowledge and understanding in order to analyse questions related to religious beliefs and values
- construct well-informed and balanced arguments on matters concerned with religious beliefs and values set out in the subject content.

## 4.1 Aims and learning outcomes

Courses based on this specification should encourage students to:

- develop their knowledge and understanding of religions and non-religious beliefs, such as atheism and humanism
- develop their knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs, teachings and sources of wisdom and authority, including through their reading of key religious texts, other texts and scriptures of the religions they are studying
- develop their ability to construct well-argued, well-informed, balanced and structured written arguments, demonstrating their depth and breadth of understanding of the subject
- reflect on and develop their own values, belief, meaning, purpose, truth and their influence on human life
- reflect on and develop their own values, beliefs and attitudes in the light of what they have learnt and contribute to their preparation for adult life in a pluralistic society and global community.

## 4.2 Assessment objectives

Assessment objectives (AOs) are set by Ofqual and are the same across all GCSE Religious Studies A specifications and all exam boards.

The exams will measure how students have achieved the following assessment objectives.

- AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and beliefs including:
  - beliefs, practices and sources of authority
  - influence on individuals, communities and societies
  - similarities and differences within and/or between religions and beliefs.
- AO2: Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief, including their significance and influence.

### Assessment objective weightings for GCSE Religious Studies A

Assessment objectives (AOs)	Component weightings (approx %)		Overall weighting (approx %)
	Paper 1	Paper 2	
AO1	25	25	50
AO2	25	25	50
Overall weighting of components	50	50	100

## 4.3 Assessment weightings

The marks awarded on the papers will be scaled to meet the weighting of the components. Students' final marks will be calculated by adding together the scaled marks for each component. Grade boundaries will be set using this total scaled mark. The scaling and total scaled marks are shown in the table below.

Component	Maximum raw mark	Scaling factor	Maximum scaled mark
Component 1	101	1	101
Component 2	101	1	101
Total scaled mark:			202

## 4.4 Assessment structure

There are two routes through this specification. Students should enter either Route A or Route B, depending on whether they study textual studies options.

In Route A students must answer questions on two specified religions in Component 1A (Christianity and Catholic Christianity are prohibited combinations), and four from religious, philosophical and ethical studies themes in Component 2A.

In Route B students must answer questions on either Christianity or Catholic Christianity plus one religion from the other five specified religions in Component 1B, and two from six religious, philosophical and ethical studies themes plus both textual studies themes in Component 2B.

### 4.4.1 Component 1: Study of religions

For each exam, the following will apply.

- Students must answer questions on two specified religions (Christianity and Catholic Christianity are prohibited combinations).
- Two compulsory five-part questions will be set on each religion.
- Each five-part question is worth 24 marks, with 12 marks for AO1 and 12 marks for AO2.
- The structure of the five-part questions will be identical across all religions; marks will be allocated as follows: 1, 2, 4, 5 and 12.
- In each five-part question, AO1 is tested in the first four questions; AO2 is assessed through the 12 mark question.

Up to 5 marks are awarded in respect of spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPaG) based on performance in the 12 mark extended writing questions.

Marks will be awarded on the basis of a student's best performance in these questions.

### 4.4.2 Component 2: Thematic studies

For each exam, the following will apply.

- Students must answer questions on four themes from religious, philosophical and ethical themes and textual themes (see [Assessments](#) (page 8) and [Entries and codes](#) (page 33) for details).
- Students may answer questions on four religious, philosophical and ethical themes or two religious, philosophical and ethical themes plus two textual themes.
- One compulsory five-part question will be set per theme.
- Each five-part question is worth 24 marks, with 12 marks for AO1 and 12 marks for AO2.
- The structure of the five-part questions will be identical: marks will be allocated as follows; 1, 2, 4, 5 and 12.
- In each five-part question, AO1 is tested in the first four questions; AO2 is assessed through the 12 mark question.

Up to 5 marks are awarded in respect of spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPaG) based on performance in the 12 mark extended writing questions.

Marks will be awarded on the basis of a student's best performance in these questions.

## 4.5 Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPaG)

Spelling, punctuation and grammar will be assessed in 12 mark questions against the following criteria:

Level	Performance descriptor	Marks awarded
<b>High performance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learners spell and punctuate with consistent accuracy.</li><li>• Learners use rules of grammar with effective control of meaning overall.</li><li>• Learners use a wide range of specialist terms as appropriate.</li></ul>	4–5
<b>Intermediate performance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learners spell and punctuate with considerable accuracy.</li><li>• Learners use rules of grammar with general control of meaning overall.</li><li>• Learners use a good range of specialist terms as appropriate.</li></ul>	2–3
<b>Threshold performance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learners spell and punctuate with reasonable accuracy.</li><li>• Learners use rules of grammar with some control of meaning and any errors do not significantly hinder meaning overall.</li><li>• Learners use a limited range of specialist terms as appropriate.</li></ul>	1
<b>No marks awarded</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The learner writes nothing.</li><li>• The learner's response does not relate to the question.</li><li>• The learner's achievement in SPaG does not reach the threshold performance level, for example errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar severely hinder meaning.</li></ul>	0

# 5 General administration

You can find information about all aspects of administration, as well as all the forms you need, at [aqa.org.uk/examsadmin](http://aqa.org.uk/examsadmin)

## 5.1 Entries and codes

You only need to make one entry for each qualification – this will cover all the question papers, non-exam assessment and certification.

Every specification is given a national discount (classification) code by the Department for Education (DfE), which indicates its subject area.

If a student takes two specifications with the same discount code:

- further and higher education providers are likely to take the view that they have only achieved one of the two qualifications
- only one of them will be counted for the purpose of the *School and College Performance tables* – the DfE's rules on 'early entry' will determine which one.

Please check this before your students start their course.

Qualification title	Option	AQA entry code	DfE discount code
AQA GCSE in Religious Studies A	Religious Studies A (excluding textual studies option)	8062A	DD1
	Religious Studies A (including textual studies option)	8062B	DD1

This specification complies with:

- Ofqual *General conditions of recognition* that apply to all regulated qualifications
- Ofqual GCSE qualification level conditions that apply to all GCSEs
- Ofqual GCSE subject level conditions that apply to all GCSEs in this subject
- all other relevant regulatory documents.

The Ofqual qualification accreditation number (QAN) is 601/8400/0.

## 5.2 Overlaps with other qualifications

There are no overlaps with any other AQA qualifications at this level.

## 5.3 Awarding grades and reporting results

The qualification will be graded on a nine-point scale: 1 to 9 – where 9 is the best grade.

Students who fail to reach the minimum standard for grade 1 will be recorded as U (unclassified) and will not receive a qualification certificate.



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## 5.4 Re-sits and shelf life

Students can re-sit the qualification as many times as they wish, within the shelf life of the qualification.

## 5.5 Previous learning and prerequisites

There are no previous learning requirements. Any requirements for entry to a course based on this specification are at the discretion of schools and colleges.

## 5.6 Access to assessment: diversity and inclusion

General qualifications are designed to prepare students for a wide range of occupations and further study. Therefore our qualifications must assess a wide range of competences.

The subject criteria have been assessed to see if any of the skills or knowledge required present any possible difficulty to any students, whatever their ethnic background, religion, sex, age, disability or sexuality. If any difficulties were encountered, the criteria were reviewed again to make sure that tests of specific competences were only included if they were important to the subject.

As members of the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) we participate in the production of the JCQ document *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments: General and Vocational qualifications*. We follow these guidelines when assessing the needs of individual students who may require an access arrangement or reasonable adjustment. This document is published on the JCQ website at [jqc.org.uk](http://jqc.org.uk)

### 5.6.1 Students with disabilities and special needs

We can make arrangements for disabled students and students with special needs to help them access the assessments, as long as the competences being tested are not changed. Access arrangements must be agreed **before** the assessment. For example, a Braille paper would be a reasonable adjustment for a Braille reader but not for a student who does not read Braille.

We are required by the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments to remove or lessen any disadvantage that affects a disabled student.

If you have students who need access arrangements or reasonable adjustments, you can apply using the Access arrangements online service at [aqa.org.uk/eaqa](http://aqa.org.uk/eaqa)

### 5.6.2 Special consideration

We can give special consideration to students who have been disadvantaged at the time of the assessment through no fault of their own – for example a temporary illness, injury or serious problem such as the death of a relative. We can only do this **after** the assessment.

Your exams officer should apply online for special consideration at [aqa.org.uk/eaqa](http://aqa.org.uk/eaqa)

For more information and advice about access arrangements, reasonable adjustments and special consideration please see [aqa.org.uk/access](http://aqa.org.uk/access) or email [accessarrangementsqueries@aqa.org.uk](mailto:accessarrangementsqueries@aqa.org.uk)

## 5.7 Working with AQA for the first time

If your school or college has not previously offered any AQA specification, you need to register as an AQA centre to offer our specifications to your students. Find out how at [aqa.org.uk/becomeacentre](http://aqa.org.uk/becomeacentre)

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## 5.8 Private candidates

This specification is available to private candidates.

A private candidate is someone who enters for exams through an AQA-approved school or college but is not enrolled as a student there.

A private candidate may be self-taught, home-schooled or have private tuition, either with a tutor or through a distance learning organisation. You must be based in the UK.

If you have any queries as a private candidate, you can:

- speak to the exams officer at the school or college where you intend to take your exams
- visit our website at [aqa.org.uk/privatecandidates](https://www.aqa.org.uk/privatecandidates)
- email: [privatecandidates@aca.org.uk](mailto:privatecandidates@aca.org.uk)

## Get help and support

Visit our website for information, guidance, support and resources at [aqa.org.uk/8062](http://aqa.org.uk/8062)

You can talk directly to the religious studies subject team

E: [religiousstudies@aqa.org.uk](mailto:religiousstudies@aqa.org.uk)

T: 0161 957 3881