



Religious Studies

AQA GCSE Comparative Religious Studies

“We must learn to understand the faith of others as we understand our own.”

- **Wilfred Cantwell Smith**

Outline of the course

The AQA GCSE Religious Studies course explores religious beliefs, practices, and their influence on moral and social issues. Students study two religions: Christianity and Islam, focusing on both beliefs and practices.

In Christianity, students learn about beliefs such as:

- the nature of God
- the Trinity
- creation
- Jesus as the Son of God
- salvation
- life after death.

Christian practices include worship, prayer, sacraments, major festivals such as Christmas and Easter, and the role of the Church locally and globally.

In Islam, beliefs include:

- the oneness of Allah (Tawhid)
- angels
- prophets
- holy books
- the afterlife
- divine predestination

Islamic practices focus on the Five Pillars of Islam, including Salah, Zakah, fasting during Ramadan, and Hajj.

The course also covers four thematic ethics units:

- **Relationships and Families** - explores marriage, divorce, gender roles, and family life.
- **Religion and Life** - examines creation, abortion, euthanasia, and environmental responsibility.
- **Religion, Peace and Conflict** - considers war, peace, justice, terrorism, and reconciliation.
- **Religion, Crime and Punishment** - focuses on law, justice, forgiveness, and punishment.

Through studying these topics, students develop a broader world view, learning to understand diverse beliefs and perspectives. This increases their cultural capital, equipping them with knowledge, empathy, and critical thinking skills that support respectful dialogue and active citizenship in a diverse society.

Syllabus Content

TERM	YEAR 9
<i>Autumn</i>	<i>Religious, Philosophical and Ethical Studies in the Modern World (02) – Relationships and Families.</i>
<i>Spring</i>	<i>Study of Religions (01) – Religious Practices (Islam)</i>
<i>Summer</i>	<i>Study of Religions (01) – Beliefs and Teachings (Christianity)</i>
TERM	YEAR 10
<i>Autumn</i>	<i>Religious, Philosophical and Ethical Studies in the Modern World (02) - Religion, Peace and Conflict.</i>
<i>Spring</i>	<i>Study of Religions (01) – Beliefs and Teachings (Islam)</i>
<i>Summer</i>	<i>Religious, Philosophical and Ethical Studies in the Modern World (02) – Religion and Life</i>
TERM	YEAR 11
<i>Autumn</i>	<i>Study of Religions (01) – Religious Practices (Christianity) continued.</i>
<i>Spring</i>	<i>Religious, Philosophical and Ethical Studies in the Modern World (02) – Religion, Crime and Punishment.</i>
<i>Summer</i>	<i>Revision and exam</i>

Assessment method

The GCSE is assessed by two written examinations, both taken at the end of the course (no coursework).

Paper 1: The Study of Religions - Covers Christianity and Islam (beliefs and practices)

Paper 2: Thematic Studies - Covers the four ethics units

Each paper is 1 hour 45 minutes in length. Questions include multiple-choice, short-answer, and extended evaluation questions, with a strong focus on explaining beliefs and evaluating different viewpoints. Students are required to use religious teachings and sources of authority to support answers. This structure assesses knowledge, understanding, and the ability to analyse and evaluate religious and ethical issues.

What can I do with this qualification

A GCSE in Religious Studies is a valuable and versatile qualification that develops skills useful across many careers and further education pathways. Through studying religious beliefs, practices, and ethical issues, students build strong critical thinking, evaluation, and communication skills.

They learn to analyse different viewpoints, construct balanced arguments, and support ideas with evidence - skills that are essential for A-levels, university study, and the workplace.

Religious Studies also helps students develop cultural awareness and empathy, preparing them to live and work in a diverse society. This makes it particularly useful for careers in law, education, healthcare, social work, politics, journalism, and public services, where understanding people's values and beliefs is important. Employers and colleges value the subject because it shows that students can engage thoughtfully with complex issues, debate respectfully, and think independently. Overall, GCSE Religious Studies is considered a useful qualification because it supports academic success while helping students become informed, tolerant, and reflective individuals.

For further information see

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