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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 1.0 11 February 2016



### 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.

## 3.1.2 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

### 3.1.2.1 Beliefs and teachings

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#### 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.

### 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.

### 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.