Scheme of work

**Section A: The study of religions: beliefs and teachings – Christianity (Short Course)**

**Introduction**

This SOW offers a route through the GCSE Religious Studies Short Course (8061). This is a sample scheme of work and is only one suggestion for how the delivery of the GCSE Religious Studies specification might be planned. It is not intended to be prescriptive or definitive and can be edited to suit your delivery model and the particular needs of your learners.

Teachers can use the ideas below to develop schemes which suit the arrangements and time allocations of their own schools and colleges.

Please remember that assessment is always based on the content of the [specification](https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/religious-studies/gcse/religious-studies-short-course-8061/specification-at-a-glance).

You can find past assessment materials on [Centre Services](https://onlineservices.aqa.org.uk/).

**General timings**

The scheme of work is based on a total of 60 teaching hours. Of these 60 hours, we suggest that each of the religions studied should be covered in approximately 15 hours.

**Contents**

You can use the title links to jump directly to the different sections of this scheme of work (Use Ctrl and click to follow the link)

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Lesson 1

**Topic title**

Introduction/pre-work.

Specification content

Brief introduction to Christianity, setting it in its historical and social context. Eg Ancient Judaism (noting that the key distinction between Judaism and Christianity is the concept of Jesus as Messiah/still awaiting the Messiah), Israel under Roman rule, the spread of Christianity globally etc.

Possible teaching and learning activities

* Multidisciplinary RS\*: applying a historical lens – briefly examine a timeline of Early Christianity, eg the adoption of the faith and its spread in Roman Empire as Catholicism; the Orthodox schism; reformation and birth of Church of England under Henry VIII; and further denominational developments. See for example:
* [Major denominational groups and heresies within Christianity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schism_in_Christianity#/media/File:Major_denominational_groups_and_heresies_within_Christianity.svg)
* [BBC Religions – the basics of Christian history](https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/history/history_1.shtml)
* Look at the story of Martin Luther to help students understand how personal reading of scripture can lead to countless interpretations and denominations/groups within the global Church.
* Briefly discuss the varying use of sources of authority such as tradition and/or scripture.
* The Bible as a source of authority – [Bible Society’s Sources of Wisdom resources](https://educationresources.biblesociety.org.uk/gcse-religious-studies/aqa/). Students could evaluate the notion of ‘word of God’.
* Multidisciplinary RS\*: applying a Sociological lens – examine some statistics on Christianity worldwide and in the UK. (see for example [PEW forum - The Global Religious Landscape](https://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/) and [Office for National Statistics](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion)).

\*By multidisciplinary RS, we’re referring to the range of academic and analytical approaches and methodologies that the study of religion employs. For example, it may draw on sociological, historical, archaeological, anthropological, philosophical, theological ways of thinking. See for example, [Ofsted’s explanation of ‘Ways of Knowing’](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-religious-education/research-review-series-religious-education) and this blog post on [Disciplinarity in Religion & Worldviews](https://reformingre.wordpress.com/category/disciplines/)

**Lesson 2**

**Topic title**

Key Beliefs: The nature of God.

**Specification content**

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.

Learning outcomes/Possible teaching and learning activities

Nature of God:

* Key terms: omnipotent, loving, just.
* Why are these qualities important to believers?
* Why does the existence of evil and suffering make it difficult to believe in an omnipotent/loving/just God? (eg Inconsistent triad).

Oneness of God and the Trinity:

* The importance of oneness in the context of monotheism (eg ‘I Am’ statements etc).
* Trinity: the doctrinal concept of God in three persons (eg Doctrinal statements such as creeds could be used; Jesus’ baptism; Genesis 1:1; Acts 2 etc).

Differentiation and extension

Nature of God:

* See [RE online](https://www.reonline.org.uk/resources/god/) for resources linking to the Nicene Creed.
* Use Genesis 1-2 to identify the qualities of God as described (eg Omnipotence etc). That This can be a good way to begin the process of identifying underlying meaning of texts at the same time as learning about the nature of God.
* Compare with concepts of God/Ultimate Reality in the second religion of study. (Note this may be useful for extension and for showing connections between worldviews, but on the Paper 1 Religions exams, students must remain focussed on the religion of study in their responses, ie Christianity only).

Oneness of God and the Trinity:

* Consider the formation of the creeds in the context of the early church; evaluate their usefulness to believers today.
* Why don’t all Christians follow the same creed? Briefly discuss the different ways the early church interpreted core concepts like Trinity to show how heterodoxy worked.
* Non-Trinitarian denominations/groups could be considered as an extension; consider the differences within the global church in terms of doctrine (leading to practice/ethics etc).

(Note: the specification content on Trinity must be covered from a Trinitarian perspective and this should be the focus in the exam).

* Gendered statements about God as ‘Father’ could be highlighted and discussed. Show students images/paintings of Jesus sitting to the right of God. How is the relationship between them shown?

**Lesson 3**

**Topic title**

Key Beliefs: Creation.

**Specification content**

Different Christian beliefs about creation including the role of Word and Spirit (John 1:1-3 and Genesis 1:1-3).

Possible teaching and learning activities

Genesis 1:1-3:

* Read the text and note the presence/action of the creative Word and Spirit.
* Consider the symbolism of the opening verses; eg Order from chaos (water), creation ex nihilo etc. Why is this important?
* How might different Christians today understand the Genesis story?

John 1:1-3:

* Read the text and identify links with the Genesis verses.
* How does John’s Gospel use the idea of the Word? What is the writer trying to say? Apply the two texts to Trinity and Nature of God.

Differentiation and extension

* Read further through Genesis 1-3 and link to Key Beliefs – original sin.
* Read further through John’s prologue (v1-18) and identify what the text is saying about Jesus.
* Links to Key Beliefs: nature of God, Trinity
* Explore these texts in terms of authorship, dating and as sources of authority.
* Why might the notion of the eternal Word be of comfort to believers? How might verses such as John 1:10-12 be a reassurance or inspiration to those who feel marginalised?
* Interpretation of texts literally and non-literally: are Genesis and Scientific theories of Creation compatible? Does a non-literal view of the text impact on beliefs about the nature of God?

Resources

See [‘Creation’ BibleSociety resources.’](https://educationresources.biblesociety.org.uk/common/pdf/aqa/aqa2.pdf)

**Lesson 4**

**Topic title**

Jesus Christ and salvation.

**Specification content**

Beliefs and teachings about the Incarnation and Jesus as the Son of God.

Learning outcomes

The focus is here on the theological concept of incarnation and its meaning rather than just the birth stories.

Possible teaching and learning activities

* Refer back to John’s prologue (Jn 1:1-18) and/or the two birth narratives (Matt 1:19-2:12; Lk 1:26-38; 2:1-20) to look for details about Jesus status as both human and divine.
* Consider the creeds as statements of faith in who Jesus was/is.
* Do the birth stories have to be historically accurate to be theologically meaningful? What do they mean to Christians today?

Differentiation and extension

* Links to Practices: the sacrament of baptism and the celebration of Christmas.
* Multidisciplinary RS: applying a philosophical lens. How can one being be both human and divine? Introduce the historical context of Council of Chalcedon briefly as the result of many scholars and church fathers debating this very question.
* If there was no incarnation, could there still be Christianity? Is belief in Jesus’ resurrection more important? What if Jesus was ‘just a man’ who was a moral teacher? (eg the theological debate between Athanasius and Arius; most Christians before 325 would’ve held a middle position between belief in the Incarnation and the more remote God depicted by Arius. Athanasius’ position is what led to the Nicene Creed).
* Examine popular Christian symbolism eg Icthus (fish), Alpha and Omega, Chi-Rho (see Specification B).
* Consider the annunciation and its significance especially in the Roman Catholicism. How might some contemporary feminists view this event?

Possible extension link to Islam: Beliefs, holy books. See the documentary [‘The Muslim Jesus’](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPWK7w1ov4c)  (Note this may be useful for extension and for showing connections between worldviews, but on the Paper 1 Religions exams, students must remain focused on the religion of study in their responses, ie Christianity only).

Resources

Useful resource: [REonline – How could Jesus be God?](https://www.reonline.org.uk/resources/how-could-jesus-be-god/)

**Lesson 5**

**Topic title**

Jesus Christ and salvation.

**Specification content**

Beliefs and teachings about the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension.

Learning outcomes

The focus in this section is on understanding Jesus’ crucifixion as a historical reality and as a theological event; understanding the resurrection as historically ambiguous but as having clear religious importance; exploring the importance of the belief in Jesus’ ascension and what the ascension narratives indicate about the person of Jesus.

Possible teaching and learning activities

* Outline a timeline of events from the Passion narrative through to the ascension. This could include one (or more) of the gospel accounts of Jesus’ trials to explain why both Jews and Romans condemned him.
* Explore the question, ‘Why was Jesus crucified?’, looking especially for Jesus’ suffering and death as an example of obedience to God, as atonement for sin and as inspiration for those who are suffering.
* Examine gospel account(s) of the empty tomb and Jesus’ resurrection appearances.
* Discuss: How far are the gospel accounts historically accurate?
* What does the crucifixion mean to Christians today?
* Can we consider the gospels to be evidence for Jesus’ resurrection? Or can we explain the tomb another way?
* Did Jesus rise bodily from the grave? What does resurrection mean for different groups of Christians? (eg literalist and liberal interpreters of the Bible).
* What do ascension narratives say about Jesus’ nature and about the early church?
* Refer back to the creeds and see how these beliefs feature/evaluate their relative importance to Christian communities.

Differentiation and extension

* Links to Key Beliefs: afterlife and Theme B: beliefs about death and an afterlife.
* Links to Practices: the sacrament of Holy Communion/Eucharist, the sacrament of baptism and the celebration of Easter.
* Consider how persecuted people may respond to the suffering of Jesus on the cross, and then his resurrection/ascension. How might belief in the reward for suffering (eg Matthew 5: 10 – 12) have been used to justify oppression in history? Is suffering justified and glorified in the resurrection and ascension accounts? How does this influence Christian charity work? (Link to Christianity practices eg Barnabas Fund).
* What are the differences between cross and crucifix symbols? How does this help us to understand what the crucifixion means to Christians today?

**Lesson 6**

**Topic title**

Jesus Christ and salvation.

**Specification content**

Beliefs and teachings about:

* sin, including original sin
* the means of salvation, including law, grace and Spirit
* the role of Christ in salvation including the idea of atonement.

Learning outcomes

The focus is on how Jesus Christ is the key to Christian teaching and beliefs about sin and salvation.

Possible teaching and learning activities

* Types of sin could be discussed and distinction could be drawn between individual sins (bad actions) and the state of sin (pervasive badness, human tendency to choose evil).
* Explore ideas about how evil came about and the concept of original sin/different ways of understanding it.
* Read Genesis 3 and unpick it using questions: what is the sin? What are the consequences of sin? (judgement and hell; effects on victim and perpetrator.) Can sin be undone Consider the effect of being/saying sorry.
* Consider laws/rules, eg Ten Commandments, and how these can help people avoid sin.
* Discuss: Does God have to forgive sins? Lead into discussion of the concept of grace.

Differentiation and extension

* Imagine a world where no one was able to disobey God’s rules because they had no free will. Would a sinless life be worth living? What would a world without suffering look like?
* Multidisciplinary RS: applying a philosophical lens. See Specification B on Irenaeus and Augustine.
* Consider means of salvation and beliefs about faith and works, eg the parable of the Sheep and Goats.
* Example of ‘altar calls’/‘salvation opportunities’ given in evangelical church services (link to non-liturgical worship).
* Compare with Islamic beliefs about sin; dharmic beliefs in liberation; Jewish concepts of the Messiah and the observance of Yom Kippur.

Resources

Look at possible readings of the text of Gen 3. Eg a feminist reading of Gen 3, see this [REonline resource](https://www.reonline.org.uk/resources/what-can-be-learnt-from-feminist-interpretations-of-the-bible/).

**Lesson 7**

**Topic title**

Jesus Christ and salvation.

**Specification content**

Beliefs and teachings about:

* sin, including original sin
* the means of salvation, including law, grace and Spirit
* the role of Christ in salvation including the idea of atonement.

Learning outcomes

The focus is on how Jesus Christ is the key to Christian teaching and beliefs about sin and salvation.

Possible teaching and learning activities

* Types of sin could be discussed and distinction could be drawn between individual sins (bad actions) and the state of sin (pervasive badness, human tendency to choose evil).
* Explore ideas about how evil came about and the concept of original sin/different ways of understanding it.
* Read Genesis 3 and unpick it using questions: what is the sin? What are the consequences of sin? (Judgement and hell; effects on victim and perpetrator.) Can sin be undone? Consider the effect of being/saying sorry.
* Consider laws/rules, eg Ten Commandments, and how these can help people avoid sin.
* Discuss: Does God have to forgive sins? Lead into discussion of the concept of grace.
* Link to concept of atonement already mentioned in the context of the crucifixion How does a commitment to, or membership of, Christianity offer atonement for all sin to Christians? Concepts of repentance, grace, forgiveness, redemption (see for example Romans 5-6).
* Discuss: Can people who aren’t Christian be saved?

Differentiation and extension

* Imagine a world where no one was able to disobey God’s rules because they had no free will. Would a sinless life be worth living? What would a world without suffering look like?
* Multidisciplinary RS: applying a philosophical lens. See Specification B on Irenaeus and Augustine.
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