AQA AS/A2 Philosophy and AQA AS/A2 Religious Studies
Confirmation of approaches and clarification of overlap

Background
We've developed the new A-level Philosophy specification to address comments received from teachers of the subject.

The topics in AS and A2 Philosophy are
AS Epistemology and Philosophy of Religion
A2 Ethics and Philosophy of Mind.

Teachers of both AQA A-level Religious Studies and AQA A-level Philosophy are reassured that:

- there is very little overlap in overall subject content between both specifications
- where there is overlap, the emphases are different (Teachers of AQA Religious Studies do not, therefore, need to make changes to the topics selected for study in order to enable students to study AQA Philosophy)
- your feedback helps us to continuously improve our qualifications.

Note
The Government’s reform plans for A-levels and GCSEs, and how these will affect both of these subjects, are still unclear. As soon as we know more about their plans and how they will affect both Religious Studies and Philosophy, we will contact you.

The question of overlap
The questions and use of text the Philosophy specification uses are very different from Religious Studies. Religious Studies is more focused upon the effective functioning of aspects of philosophical thinking and systems in determined religious contexts, whereas philosophy is focused upon the success of a certain philosophy or philosophical system as a philosophy per se.

For example, both specifications refer to students knowing about Utilitarianism. Religious Studies students are expected to comment upon its effectiveness as an ethical system, often in the context of religion. Philosophy students are expected to comment upon its effectiveness as an ethical system but with an emphasis upon the philosophical mechanics of the variety of Utilitarian systems.

Where there is similar subject matter, students will be expected to deal with the subject matter in a very different way, as can be seen from the style of questions asked.

Philosophy also requires a study of original philosophical texts.
AS level units

Religious Studies Unit A
Topic 1 commonality with Utilitarianism but different focus as noted above (Philosophy A2). Strongly text based in Philosophy with a link to forms of ethical naturalism and naturalistic fallacy. Topics 2-4 no commonality.

Religious Studies Unit B
Topic 1 Kant but far greater emphasis upon the philosophy of Kant rather than the application Philosophy A2). Topics 2-4 no commonality.

Religious Studies Unit C
Topic 1 commonality but not same emphasis upon religion as in Religious Studies (Philosophy AS), Philosophy has a focus upon the logical structures of the arguments. Topics 2-4 No commonality.

Religious Studies Unit D
Topics 1, 2 and 4 no commonality. Topic 3 commonality different emphasis (Philosophy AS).

Religious Studies Units E-L no commonality.

A2 Religious Studies Unit 3

Religious Studies Unit 3A
Topic 1.
Topic 2 Virtue ethics, philosophy limited to Aristotle, based in the Nicomachean ethics text, again strong focus upon philosophy. Set issues different, eg crime and punishment, war, treatment of animals, eg eat, hunt, etc. (Philosophy A2). Topics 1, 3 and 4 no commonality.

Religious Studies Unit 3B
Topic 1 Ontological argument in both, questions set very different as focus is upon does it work philosophically (Philosophy AS). Philosophy is interested in the development of the argument in response to objections up to Plantinga, not its relation to faith. Topic 2 Religious language in both, philosophy looking again at effectiveness as philosophical ideas, not relating to effectiveness for religion as in Religious Studies (Philosophy AS). Topic 3 No commonality. Topic 4 Narrower approach than Philosophy - only Plantinga and Hick. (Philosophy AS) Focus in Philosophy is on the logic of the arguments rather than in relation to religious belief and faith.

Religious Studies 3C, 3D, 3E, 3F, 3G, 3H no commonality.
Comparison with A-level Religious Studies Unit 4

Religious Studies Unit 4A
Topic 1 no commonality.
Topic 2 first section yes commonality of subject in most aspects but not linked to different religions at all (Philosophy AS). Philosophy is interested in the logic of the proposed attributes for God.
Topic 3 no commonality.

Religious Studies Unit 4B no commonality.

Religious Studies Unit 4C
Topic 1 no commonality because all Religious Studies is linked to religion.
Topic 2 commonality with ethical systems and moral decisions, but not linked as Religious Studies to two specific areas for effectiveness (Philosophy A2).
Topic 3 no commonality.