

GCE



CCEA GCE Specification in Religious Studies

Version 2: 18 December 2017

For first teaching from September 2016
For first award of AS level in Summer 2017
For first award of A level in Summer 2018
Subject Code: 4610



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Subject Code	4610
QAN AS Level	601/8452/8
QAN A Level	601/8453/X
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1 Introduction

This specification sets out the content and assessment details for our Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and Advanced GCE courses in Religious Studies. First teaching is from September 2016.

Students can take:

- the AS course as a final qualification; or
- the AS units plus the A2 units for a full GCE A level qualification.

We assess the AS units at a standard appropriate for students who have completed the first part of the full course. A2 units have an element of synoptic assessment (to assess students' understanding of the subject as a whole), as well as more emphasis on assessment objectives that reflect higher order thinking skills.

The full Advanced GCE award is based on students' marks from the AS (40 percent) and the A2 (60 percent). The guided learning hours for this specification, as for all GCEs, are:

- 180 hours for the Advanced Subsidiary level award; and
- 360 hours for the Advanced level award.

We will make the first AS awards for the specification in 2017 and the first A level awards in 2018. The specification builds on the broad objectives of the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

If there are any major changes to this specification, we will notify centres in writing. The online version of the specification will always be the most up to date; to view and download this please go to www.ccea.org.uk

1.1 Aims

This specification aims to encourage students to:

- develop their interest and enthusiasm for religious studies;
- relate their studies to the local cultural and religious environment and to the wider world;
- draw together different areas of knowledge, skills, understanding, synthesis and evaluation via synoptic assessment;
- develop higher order thinking skills, for example independent learning, creative thinking and problem-solving;
- reflect on and develop their own values, opinions and attitudes in the light of their learning;
- develop the ability to make responsible judgements on significant textual, theological, philosophical and moral issues;
- work with others in groups both locally and further afield;
- develop advanced study skills that help them prepare for third level education and the world of work;
- provide extended responses and evidence of quality of written communication; and
- demonstrate through external assessments that they can understand and evaluate key concepts.

1.2 Key features

The following are important features of this specification.

- It gives students a choice of options to explore various areas of study in religion.
- It allows the study of other aspects of human experience at AS and A2.
- Synoptic assessment forms part of the two A2 assessment units. This encourages students to develop their understanding of the subject as a whole.
- Study at A2 will stretch and challenge students and provides a sound foundation for higher education and a range of careers.
- A range of support is available, including specimen assessment materials, exemplar schemes of work and teacher guidance.

1.3 Prior attainment

Students do not need to have reached a particular level of attainment before beginning to study this specification. However, the specification builds on the knowledge, understanding and skills developed in GCSE Religious Studies.

1.4 Classification codes and subject combinations

Every specification has a national classification code that indicates its subject area. The classification code for this qualification is 4610.

Please note that if a student takes two qualifications with the same classification code, universities and colleges that they apply to may take the view that they have achieved only one of the two GCEs. The same may occur with any two GCE qualifications that have a significant overlap in content, even if the classification codes are different. Because of this, students who have any doubts about their subject combinations should check with the universities and colleges that they would like to attend before beginning their studies.

2 Specification at a Glance

For both AS level and A2, students complete two units from the following areas of study: Textual Studies, Systematic Study of One Religion, Religion and Ethics, and Philosophy of Religion.

Students must study **two** of these units at AS level and a further **two** units at A2. Students **must not** choose two units from the same area of study. At A2, students can study the corresponding units from AS level or they can choose different units.

The table below summarises the structure of the AS and A level courses:

Content	Assessment	Weightings
<p>Textual Studies AS 1: An Introduction to the Gospel of Luke AS 2: An Introduction to the Acts of the Apostles AS 3: An Introduction to Themes in the Old Testament</p> <p>Systematic Study of One Religion AS 4: The Origins and Development of the Early Christian Church to AD 325 AS 5: The Celtic Church in Ireland in the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Centuries AS 6: An Introduction to Islam</p> <p>Religion and Ethics AS 7: Foundations of Ethics with Special Reference to Issues in Medical Ethics</p> <p>Philosophy of Religion AS 8: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion</p>	<p>Two 1 hour 20 minute external written examinations</p> <p>Students answer one from two questions in Section A and one from two questions in Section B.</p>	<p>Each paper is worth 50% of AS and 20% of A level</p>

Content	Assessment	Weightings
<p>Textual Studies A2 1: Themes in the Synoptic Gospels A2 2: Themes in Selected Letters of St Paul A2 3: Themes in the Old Testament</p> <p>Systematic Study of One Religion A2 4: Themes in the Early Church and the Church Today A2 5: Themes in the Celtic Church, Reformation and Post-Reformation Church A2 6: Islam in a Contemporary Context</p> <p>Religion and Ethics A2 7: Global Ethics</p> <p>Philosophy of Religion A2 8: Themes in the Philosophy of Religion</p>	<p>Two 2 hour external written examinations</p> <p>Students answer two from three questions in Section A and the compulsory synoptic question in Section B.</p>	<p>Each paper is worth 50% of A2 and 30% of A level</p>

3 Subject Content

We have divided this course into four units: two units at AS level and two units at A2. This section sets out the content and learning outcomes for each unit.

At both AS level and A2, there are four areas of study: Textual Studies, Systematic Study of One Religion, Religion and Ethics, and Philosophy of Religion. These areas of study are further subdivided into units, as listed in Section 2 of this specification.

Students must study **two** of these units at AS level and a further **two** units at A2. Students **must not** choose two units from the same area of study. At A2, students can study the corresponding units from AS level or they can choose different units.

Any version of the Bible may be used for study purposes. However, where quotations are used in assessment unit questions, these will be taken from the Revised Standard Version (RSV).

3.1 AS Textual Studies

Unit AS 1: An Introduction to the Gospel of Luke

In this unit, students explore the content of the Gospel of Luke, starting with an understanding of how and why the Gospel was written. Students learn about the religious and political situation in Palestine at the time of Jesus, referring to the beliefs and practices of relevant religious groups. Students learn about key events in the ministry of Jesus, focusing on the Infancy Narrative and early ministry.

This unit introduces students to the Kingdom of God in Luke's Gospel through a study of selected miracles and parables. Students learn about miracles of healing and raising to life, which is contrary to the laws of nature. During their study of the parables, students focus on the theme of mercy, forgiveness and the Kingdom of God. They study the themes of discipleship and Salvation History within the context of contemporary scholarship.

Students also explore the relationship between the Gospel of Luke and other aspects of human experience. These are outlined at the end of the unit.

Assessment for this unit consists of a written examination. For more details, see Section 6.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>The Kingdom of God in the parables and miracles in Luke's Gospel</p> <p>Key themes in Luke's Gospel</p> <p>Other aspects of human experience</p>	<p>Student should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate parables, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the meaning, purpose, characteristics and theological interpretation of parables in Luke; – parables of mercy: the Good Samaritan (10:25–37), the Forgiving Father (15:11–32) and the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19–31); and – parables of the Kingdom: the Sower (8:4–15) and the Great Banquet (14:12–24); • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate miracles, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the meaning, purpose, theology and credibility of miracles in Luke; – healing miracles: the Centurion's Servant (7:1–10), the Ten Lepers (17:11–19); – raising to life: The Widow's Son (7:11–17); – nature miracles: Calming of the Storm (8:22–25); and – Feeding of the Five Thousand (9:10–17); • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate discipleship, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the call to discipleship (5:1–11, 27–32, 6:12–16); – the nature of mission (9:1–6, 10:1–16); – the demands of discipleship (9:18–27, 57–62, 14:25–33); – teachings to disciples (11:1–13, 12:8–12, 22–34); and – the role of Peter (22:31–34, 22:54–62); • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate Salvation History, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – an overview of the concept of Salvation History; – Luke's portrayal of Salvation History; and – contribution and critique of the work of relevant scholars; • critically evaluate the problems posed by religious divisions and the opportunity for religious and ethical enrichment; and • critically evaluate the role of the sacred text for religious believers in any age.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>Other aspects of human experience (cont.)</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • critically evaluate the importance of Christian outreach to those who are marginalised; • critically evaluate the relevance of initiation and ritual in religion; • critically evaluate the importance of mercy in the life of the religious believer; • critically evaluate the debate about the validity and relevance of miracles; • critically evaluate the demands of discipleship in any age; and • critically evaluate the relevance of the claims of the Gospel in a multi-religious world to both Salvation and Resurrection.

Unit AS 2: An Introduction to the Acts of the Apostles

In this unit, students explore the beginnings of the Church of the New Testament. Students trace the journey of the Gospel, from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria and into the Gentile world of the first century. At the start of the unit, students set the Acts of the Apostles in the context of the New Testament by studying authorship, date and purpose. They also learn about the organisation and worship of the early Christian community.

Students identify the role and importance of key individuals in the growth and expansion of the church and assess their contribution. Students focus on Peter, Stephen and Philip with the start of the missionary work in Jerusalem, and the first expansion to Judea and Samaria. They study Paul's work as a missionary and evangelist through his missionary journeys and speeches.

Students also explore the relationship between the Acts of the Apostles and other aspects of human experience. These are outlined at the end of the unit.

Assessment for this unit consists of a written examination. For more details, see Section 6.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>The context of Acts</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the background to the Acts of the Apostles, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – internal and external evidence for the authorship of Acts; – the arguments for an early, intermediate and late date; – the purpose of Acts; – the characteristics of Acts; – the 'we' passages; – challenges to the traditional authorship and historical accuracy of Acts; and – the social and historical context of Acts; and • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the characteristics of the early Christian community, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – church life and organisation, focusing on the church as a fellowship of believers (2:42–47, 4:23–37); – the need for discipline in the church (5:1–11); and – the role of miracles in aiding the spread of the Gospel (3:1–10, 4:23–31, 5:12–16, 16:16–37).

Unit AS 3: An Introduction to Themes in the Old Testament

In this unit, students explore areas of the Old Testament and critically place them within their historical contexts and the traditions of the Hebrew Bible. Students examine the texts, many of which appear to have been written retrospectively, as theological and political literature.

At the start of this unit, students explore the ideas of covenant and election. Students focus on the unique relationship between God and the Israelites as the chosen people. Within this theme, key people from the Old Testament are a focus for critical and analytical study. The final theme on the Prophet Amos allows students to consider the implication of election and responsibility and the need for social justice.

Students also explore the relationship between the Old Testament and other aspects of human experience. These are outlined at the end of the unit.

Assessment for this unit consists of a written examination. For more details, see Section 6.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>Covenant and election</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the term covenant, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the theological concept, context and purpose of covenants, including God’s election and call of the ‘chosen people’ as shown in Noahic (Genesis 9:1–17), Abrahamic (Genesis 12:1–9, Genesis 17:1–27) and Mosaic (Exodus 19:1–15, Exodus 20:1–17) covenants; – failure of the people to observe covenant obligations; – pre-exilic denunciation and Isaiah’s call (Isaiah 5:8–30, 6:1–13); and – the <i>rib</i> (court case) as literary device (Isaiah 1:2–31, based on Deuteronomy 32:1–47, Isaiah 3:13–26); and • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate covenant: exclusion and embrace, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the post-exilic historical and political context; – election and exclusion (Ezra 9:1–10:17, Nehemiah 10:28–39, Nehemiah 13:1–31); – election and inclusion (Isaiah 19:18–25, Isaiah 56:1–8, Amos 9:7–15); and – Psalm 96: a vision of God’s reign and judgement.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>Other aspects of human experience (cont.)</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • critically evaluate the relationship between monarchy, religion and politics; • critically evaluate the challenge of opposing values to the religious believer in a relativistic age; • critically evaluate discerning the true prophetic voice in any age; and • critically evaluate perennial issues surrounding social justice, human rights and moral responsibility.

3.2 AS Systematic Study of One Religion

Unit AS 4: The Origins and Development of the Early Christian Church to AD 325

In this unit, students explore the beginning, growth and development of the Christian Church in the first three centuries. Students focus on the possible reasons for expansion and study the causes and course of persecution. Students learn about the development of early Christian thought as characterised by Apostolic Fathers and apologists. They also examine in detail the contribution of the writings of Ignatius of Antioch and Justin Martyr.

Students learn about the development of the sacraments. They study the doctrine and practice of baptism and the Eucharist, referring to evidence in the sources from the period. Finally, students examine the relationship between the Christian Church and the state through the life of Emperor Constantine. They focus on events leading to his 'conversion' and his subsequent religious policies up to the Council of Nicaea.

Students also explore the relationship between the Early Christian Church to AD 325 and other aspects of human experience. These are outlined at the end of the unit.

Assessment for this unit consists of a written examination. For more details, see Section 6.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>The development of the Early Church</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate expanding the faith, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the religious and political factors that led to the growth of the Early Church; and – the impact of martyrdom with particular reference to Blandina, Justin and Polycarp; and • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate persecution, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the causes and effects of persecution in the Early Church; – the nature of persecution in the first two centuries under the Emperors Nero, Domitian, Trajan (with particular reference to Pliny's Letter to Trajan) and Marcus Aurelius; and – the changing nature of later persecutions during the reigns of Decius and Diocletian.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>Developing Christian belief and practice</p> <p>Early Christian writers</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate baptism, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – origins of baptism in the New Testament; and – development of the doctrine and practice of baptism with specific reference to Didache, Justin, Hippolytus, Tertullian and Cyprian; • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the Eucharist, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – origins of the Eucharist in the New Testament; and – development of the doctrine and practice of the Eucharist with specific reference to Didache, Justin, Hippolytus, Tertullian and Cyprian; • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate Ignatius of Antioch, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – background to the work of the Apostolic Fathers; – the life of Ignatius including his journey to martyrdom in Rome; – the letters of Ignatius to the Ephesians, Magnesians, Philadelphians, Romans, Smyrnaeans, Trallians and Polycarp; and – the key themes in these letters: unity and obedience to the bishop, heresy, Judaisers, the glory of martyrdom; and • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate Justin Martyr, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – background to the work of the apologists; – the life and work of Justin Martyr; – the writings of Justin: First Apology, Second Apology and Dialogue with Trypho the Jew; and – the main themes in Justin’s apologetic writings: political, moral, philosophical and theological arguments.

Unit AS 5: The Celtic Church in Ireland in the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Centuries

In this unit, students explore the origins, development and nature of the Celtic Church in Ireland from its pagan roots. They explore the various debates on the arrival of Christianity in Ireland and focus on the mission and writings of Patrick. Students learn about evidence and scholarly opinion on all the issues they study, along with relevant documents in the case of Patrick.

Students focus on the origins and development of Celtic monasticism. They examine the impact and importance of monasticism in Ireland and elsewhere. In the theme of Celtic hagiography, students examine the content and features of key texts along with their historical value and reliability. Finally, they study the development of the claims of Armagh, referring to relevant sources.

Students also explore the relationship between the Celtic Church in Ireland in the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries and other aspects of human experience. These are outlined at the end of the unit.

Assessment for this unit consists of a written examination. For more details, see Section 6.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>The arrival of Christianity in Ireland</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the background to the arrival of Christianity in Ireland, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the political, social and religious background; – the arrival of and the evidence for Christianity in Ireland before Patrick; and – the significance of references to Palladius; and • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the work of Patrick, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the content, themes and purpose of Patrick’s Confessio and Letter to Coroticus; – the portrait of Patrick that emerges from his writings and their continuing significance; and – the nature, successes and challenges of Patrick’s mission.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>Celtic monasticism</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the origins of Celtic monasticism, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the origins of monasticism in Ireland; and – the contribution and impact of monastic founders to the development of monasticism: Enda, Finnian of Clonard, Brigit, Brendan of Clonfert, Comgall of Bangor; • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the nature and development of Celtic monasticism, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the nature, appeal and distinctive features of Celtic monasticism; – the role and importance of monasticism for the church and society in the period studied; and – the change from episcopal to monastic organisation in the Celtic Church;
<p>Celtic penitentials</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate Celtic penitential practice, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the development of the practice of penance in the Celtic Church; and – the content and features of the Celtic penitentials with reference to the writings of Finnian, Columbanus and Cummean; • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the impact and value of the penitentials, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the role and importance of the penitentials in the Celtic Church, wider church and society in the period studied; – the value of the penitentials as historical sources; and – the concept of sin and forgiveness in the Celtic Church; and
<p>Celtic hagiography</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the nature of Celtic hagiography, including the content and features of Celtic hagiography with particular reference to Muirchú's Life of Patrick and Cogitosus' Life of Brigit.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>Celtic hagiography (cont.)</p> <p>Other aspects of human experience</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the significance and value of Celtic hagiography, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the historical value and reliability of Celtic hagiographical works; – the purpose of these works; and – the spiritual and devotional value of hagiography; • critically evaluate the relationship between religion and its social, political and cultural context; • critically evaluate the perennial issues of faith, prayer and religious authority; • critically evaluate the integrity of the religious life: a challenge for all times; • critically evaluate the role of self-denial and asceticism in religious life; • critically evaluate the relevance of penitential texts in the life of the religious believer; • critically evaluate the perennial issues of sin and forgiveness: religious and secular perspectives; • critically evaluate the moral, spiritual and religious example as revealed in the lives of saints; and • critically evaluate the spiritual and devotional value of religious writings in any age.

Unit AS 6: An Introduction to Islam

This unit introduces students to the historical origins and central beliefs of Islam. Students learn about the life and career of Muhammad and the revelations he received from God, which subsequently provided the content of the Qur'an. They place the origins of Islam in historical context, focusing on the events in the life of Muhammad that are religiously, politically and socially important.

Students identify the role of the Qur'an as constitutive of Islam. They take account of its content, structure, process of collection and relationship to other sources of authority in Islam. The unit also introduces students to the main beliefs and practices of Islam, as these are expressed in the Five Pillars of Islam. Students learn about worship, particularly worship in the mosque and in the wider role of the mosque within the Muslim community.

Students also explore the relationship between Islam and other aspects of human experience. These are outlined at the end of the unit.

Assessment for this unit consists of a written examination. For more details, see Section 6.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>The life of Muhammad</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate events in the life of Muhammad up to the Hijra, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – religious, cultural and social background; – the early life of Muhammad and the influences on him; – his call to prophethood; – early preaching and persecution in Mecca; and – the events that led to the Hijra and the movement of the Ummah (community) from Mecca to Medina; and • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate events in the life of Muhammad subsequent to the Hijra, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Muhammad's community and military leadership in Medina and his military response against the Meccans; – victorious return to Mecca; – his final sermon and death; and – the wider and continuing significance of Muhammad, taking account of a range of viewpoints, as prophet, leader, preacher, statesman and example to others.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>The Five Pillars of Islam (cont.)</p> <p>Worship and the mosque in Islam</p> <p>Other aspects of human experience</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate their role and significance, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the Pillars of Shahada, Salat, Zakat, Sawm and Hajj: their importance in Muslim life and faith; – reference to the actions and requirements of each pillar and their meaning and significance for Muslims; and – motivation, words and deeds, and eternal reward; • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate worship, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the forms and practice of prayer; – the preparations for prayer; – the significance of prayer and worship and its role in life; – the form of worship practised at Salat-ul-Jumu’ah (Friday) prayers; – worship as ibadah; and – the role of the Imam; • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the mosque, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the features of the mosque: design, architecture (dome, prayer hall, washing facilities, minaret) and their significance; and – role of the mosque in religious life and the community; • critically evaluate the significance and consequences of a religious call to people in any age; • critically evaluate religious, moral and legal responsibilities of political and religious leadership in any age; • critically evaluate the value of obedience to sacred texts; • critically evaluate sources of authority for believers beyond sacred texts; and • critically evaluate the challenge of ritual, moral and legal observance in different contexts.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>Other aspects of human experience (cont.)</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • critically evaluate the significance of religious duty in the life of the believer; • critically evaluate the challenge to preserve religious identity in a secular age; and • critically evaluate the extent to which personal religious experience is of greater value than collective worship.

3.3 AS Religion and Ethics

Unit AS 7: Foundations of Ethics with Special Reference to Issues in Medical Ethics

At the start of this unit, students explore the themes and principles that are foundational to religious ethics. These include: the role of Christian scripture in informing Christian ethics, the deontological approach of natural moral law and the teleological approaches of utilitarianism and situation ethics. Students learn about the origin and development of each ethical theory, focusing on the contribution of key writers and ethicists. They then apply these ethical approaches to key issues in medical ethics, such as human infertility, surrogacy and embryo research.

Students explore the relationship between science, technology and Christian ethics. This allows them to consider possible implications for society, marriage and the family. In their study of life and death issues, students focus on the moral debates surrounding abortion and the ethics of assisted suicide and euthanasia.

Students also explore the relationship between ethics and other aspects of human experience. These are outlined at the end of the unit.

Assessment for this unit consists of a written examination. For more details, see Section 6.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>Deontological approaches to moral decision making</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate Christian Scriptures, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the role of the Decalogue and the Sermon on the Mount; – the nature of biblical ethics; and – the role played by moral commands; and • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate natural moral law, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – origins and historical development over the centuries; – principles and key features; and – proportionalism.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>Teleological approaches to moral decision making</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate utilitarianism, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – origins and development with particular reference to the contribution of Bentham, J S Mill and Singer; – principles and key features; and – Christian utilitarianism; • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate situation ethics, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – origins and development; – the influence of the moral teaching of Jesus and Paul; – key principles; – the nature of love; and – the relationship between situation ethics and utilitarianism; and
<p>Life and death issues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate abortion, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – possible circumstances for abortion; – key defining issues including the moral status, interests and rights of the unborn and the moral status, interests and rights of the woman; – religious, secular and feminist views; – the sanctity of life principle and the personhood debate; – issues surrounding therapeutic abortion and the doctrine of double effect; and – the slippery slope argument.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>Other aspects of human experience</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • critically evaluate the relevance of biblical ethics for any age; • critically evaluate the relevance of moral absolutes in an age of relativism; • critically evaluate a consideration of the extent to which utilitarianism has become the ‘ethics of the planet’; • critically evaluate a consideration of the validity of narrative ethics; • critically evaluate the issues concerning abortion in relation to legal and state responsibilities; • critically evaluate the sovereignty of the individual in ethics; • critically evaluate the relevance of faith and ethics in the public square; and • critically evaluate how new reproductive technologies could potentially undermine the equal dignity of individuals.

3.4 AS Philosophy of Religion

Unit AS 8: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion

In this unit, students investigate a number of introductory themes in the study of philosophy of religion. Students focus on some of the classical arguments for the existence of God and assess their value for religious believers. They focus on the ontological argument, the cosmological argument and the argument from religious experience.

Students consider challenges to religious belief, such as questions raised by science, atheism and agnosticism. They explore the relationship between God and human experience through philosophical arguments for the existence of God. Students also critically assess the traditional Christian responses to evil through the works of key philosophers. At the end of the unit, students learn about religious experience and its value in the life of the believer.

Students also explore the relationship between philosophy of religion and other aspects of human experience. These are outlined at the end of the unit.

Assessment for this unit consists of a written examination. For more details, see Section 6.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>Arguments for the existence of God</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the ontological argument, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the relationship between reason and faith; – the origins and nature of the ontological argument; – the contribution of Anselm and Descartes; – reformulations of the argument; and – critique of the argument and its value for religious faith; and • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the cosmological argument, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the historical background; – its rejection of infinite regress; – the three forms of the argument in Aquinas; – reformulations of the argument; – critique of the argument and its value for religious faith; – the relevance of causality to the debate; – the universe as ‘brute fact’; and – the atheist view.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>Religious experience and its credentials</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the variety of religious experience, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – visions and mystical experiences; – religious experience in the work of Rudolf Otto; – forms of religious experience in the writings of Teresa of Avila and Martin Buber; and – the characteristics and credentials of mystical experiences; and • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate religious experience as proof for God’s existence, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – experience of God as proof of His existence; – philosophical and scientific challenges; – verification of religious experience; – scientific perspectives; – natural explanations for religious experience; and – Hick’s religious pluralism.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>Other aspects of human experience</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • critically evaluate the relationship between reason and faith in any age; • critically evaluate the social and cultural impact of secularisation and atheism; • critically evaluate the experience of evil in the world and its impact; • critically evaluate the response of atheism to the problem of evil and suffering; • critically evaluate the perennial value of miracles in the lives of religious believers; • critically evaluate miracles as psychosomatic events or coincidences, for which there is currently no scientific explanation; • critically evaluate the importance of religious conversion in the life of the believer; and • critically evaluate the link between religion and moral behaviour.

3.5 A2 Textual Studies

Unit A2 1: Themes in the Synoptic Gospels

This unit builds on the study of Luke’s Gospel completed at AS level. At the start of the unit, students discuss the Synoptic Problem. The focus of study then widens to include the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. The person of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels is a key area of study. Students focus on the ethical teaching of Jesus presenting a challenge to the attitudes of his day. Students critically compare and examine the Passion and Resurrection Narratives against a background of contemporary scholarship.

In the final theme on religious texts, authority and interpretation, students examine issues surrounding the authority of religious texts, such as the differing approaches of fundamentalism and liberalism. The role of leadership and the continuing debate within faith communities is an important issue relating to religious texts. Students initially study this theme in relation to the Synoptic Gospels. It then provides a perspective from which students can consider the content of **at least one other unit of study**.

Assessment for this unit consists of a written examination. For more details, see Section 6.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>Understanding the synoptic tradition</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the background to the Synoptic Gospels, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the Synoptic Problem; – the sources used in the synoptic tradition (source criticism); and – the relationship between the first three gospels; and • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate interpreting the text, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the importance of biblical criticism for an understanding of the Synoptic Gospels with reference to narrative criticism; and – the contribution of scholarship to developing an understanding of the Gospel of Luke and the other Synoptic Gospels.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>The person of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate Christological titles of Jesus, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the main Christological titles used to describe Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels: Son of Man and Son of God; and – the background to these titles and how each evangelist presents them; • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the ethics of Jesus, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – compassion: enemies and sinners (Matthew 5:38–48, Luke 6:27–36, 7:36–50, 19:1–10); – the command to love (Matthew 22:34–40, Mark 12:28–34, Luke 10:25–28); – wealth and poverty: the Rich Man (Matthew 19:16–30, Mark 10:17–31, Luke 18:18–30); – the Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:13–21); – riches in Heaven (Matthew 6:19–21, Luke 12:32–34); – Jesus’ warnings against oppression of the poor and the Widow’s Offering (Mark 12:38–44, Luke 20:45–21:4); – the blind beggar (Matthew 20:29–34, Mark 10:46–52, Luke 18:35–43); and – the poor (Luke 14:12–14);
<p>The Passion and Resurrection Narratives in the Synoptic Gospels</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the Passion Narratives, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the theological significance of the crucifixion, death and burial of Jesus (Matthew 27:27–61, Mark 15:21–47, Luke 23:26–56); and – critical comparison of the narratives; and • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the Resurrection Narratives, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the theological significance of the empty tomb and the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus (Mark 16:1–20, Matthew 28:1–20, Luke 24:1–53); – critical comparison of these narratives; and – contemporary theological critique of the resurrection: resuscitation or resurrection.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>Synoptic assessment theme: Religious Texts, Authority and Interpretation</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the issues of the interpretation of religious texts; • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the role and interpretation of religious texts in understanding the problem of suffering and evil; and • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the role of leadership within society and faith communities and the continuing debate about this role.

Unit A2 2: Themes in Selected Letters of St Paul

This unit builds on the study of Paul's missionary activity completed at AS level. Students explore Paul's role as a Christian evangelist in greater depth through his letters to the churches established during his missionary journeys in Acts. Students engage in detailed study of three New Testament texts and critically assess the importance of Paul's teaching for early Christian communities and the church today. Students also focus on the role of Paul as pastor and theologian.

In the final theme on controversy, division and resolution, students examine the problem of controversy in religion and highlight some potential areas of conflict. The contribution of religion in encouraging dialogue and resolution is an important issue relating to controversy and division. Students initially study this theme in relation to New Testament texts. It then provides a perspective from which students can consider the content of **at least one other unit of study**.

Assessment for this unit consists of a written examination. For more details, see Section 6.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>Paul's Letter to the Galatians</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the context of the Letter, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the social and historical context of Galatians; – the reasons for Paul writing and the issues which developed in Galatia following the First Missionary Journey (1:1–2:21); and – examination of Paul's main themes in the Letter and how these relate to his intended audience; and • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate Paul's teaching to the Galatians, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Paul's teaching on justification by faith and the purpose of the Law (3:1–5:6); – life in the Spirit and Christian freedom (5:7–6:10); – the value of this text for the Early Church; and – theological and ethical content and importance of codes for living.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate issues in Corinth, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the context of the Letter; – problems arising in the Corinthian Church following the Second Missionary Journey; – Paul's teaching on unity (1:1–4:21); and – how this teaching relates to Paul's intended audience; • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate Christian moral living, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Paul's teaching on moral living for Christians (5:1–13, 6:12–20, 7:1–8:13, 10:14–11:1); – guidance for church life and worship (11:2–14:40, 16:1–4); – the value of this text for the Early Church; and – relevance of Paul's teaching for today;
<p>Paul's Letter to the Ephesians</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the background to the Letter, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the historical context of the text: establishing the church in Ephesus during the Third Missionary Journey; – evidence for the writing of the Letter; and – Paul as teacher, pastor and theologian giving both religious teaching and practical advice; and • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the main themes of Ephesians, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – theological teaching on God's plan for Salvation through Christ (1:1–3:21); – living the Christian life: in the local church (4:1–16), in the world today (4:17–5:20), in the family and household (5:21–6:9); – spiritual warfare: the armour of God (6:10–18); – the value of this text for the Early Church; and – relevance for today.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>Synoptic assessment theme: Controversy, Division and Reconciliation</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the problem of controversy in religion, including the response of the church to conflict and controversy; • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the potential areas of moral conflict between religion and secular society; and • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the role of religion in fostering reconciliation.

Unit A2 3: Themes in the Old Testament

This unit continues with the thematic approach to Old Testament study completed at AS level. Students critically examine texts as theological and political literature within the context of Old Testament traditions and history. At the start of the unit, students evaluate the nature of God. They then consider the contrasting roles of a compassionate God and a God of war. Students also focus on the nature and importance of prophecy in the Old Testament through the key figures Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

In the final theme on leadership, text and alienation, students examine the validity of religious texts as a guide for contemporary ethics, focusing on the key issues of sin and alienation. The contribution of religious texts to leadership is an important issue relating to religion and society. Students initially study this theme in relation to the Old Testament. It then provides a perspective from which students can consider the content of **at least one other unit of study**.

Assessment for this unit consists of a written examination. For more details, see Section 6.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>The nature of God in the Old Testament</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the compassionate God, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the concept of a creedal statement (Deuteronomy 26:1–11); – God’s self-revelation (Exodus 34:1–9) including an alternative creedal statement (Exodus 34:6–7) traced through the Old Testament (Numbers 14:1–25, Psalm 86, Psalm 103, Psalm 145:1–9, Joel 2:12–14; Jonah 4:1–3); – a struggle within the heart of God (Hosea 11:1–11); and – God’s concern for the widow, orphan and foreigner (Exodus 22:21–22, Deuteronomy 14:28–29, 24:17–22, 26:11–13, 27:19, Isaiah 1:2–26, Jeremiah 7:1–11).

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>The nature of God in the Old Testament (cont.)</p> <p>The Prophet Jeremiah</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the violent God, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – God as a warrior (Exodus 14, 15:1–21); – God fighting on Israel’s side (Numbers 21:1–3, Deuteronomy 2:31–35, 3:1–7; 7:1–26); – the concept of <i>herem</i> or annihilation (Deuteronomy 20:10–20); – the theme of <i>herem</i> in the conquest narrative (Joshua 6–11); – the fate of the Amalekites (Exodus 17:8–16, Deuteronomy 25:17–19, 1 Samuel 15); and – God as a warrior in the prophetic tradition (Isaiah 59:1–20, Isaiah 63:1–6); • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the public proclamation of Jeremiah, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the background to Jeremiah’s public proclamation; – the call narrative (Jeremiah 1:4–19); – condemnation of the Temple (Jeremiah 7:1–29) and social injustices (Jeremiah 22:13–17) arising from the monarchy (Jeremiah 21:1–14) with reference to Jeremiah 4:23–28; – the intractability of human nature (Jeremiah 34:8–22); – Psalm 44 as a public lament contradicting Jeremiah’s message of breaking the covenant; and – the new covenant (Jeremiah 31:1–40); and • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the private poems of Jeremiah, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Jeremiah’s struggles with God (Jeremiah 12:1–6, 15:10–21, 17:14–18, 20:7–13, 20:14–18); – Psalm 30 as a classic template of a personal lament; and – the different elements of the lament form.

3.6 A2 Systematic Study of One Religion

Unit A2 4: Themes in the Early Church and the Church Today

The first two sections of this unit consist of themes in the Early Church followed by a section dealing with belief and belonging in the modern world. Students learn about the changing nature of authority and church government and the challenges of heresy. They link these to leadership, organisation and challenges to belief. Students also study the writings of Tertullian and Cyprian and consider the impact of modern theologians and apologists.

In the final theme on faith, morality and the state, students consider the relationship between religious faith and state authority. This includes lessons that can be learned from historical and contemporary examples. The role religion plays in reconciliation is an important issue relating to faith and the state. Students initially study this theme in relation to the Early Church. It then provides a perspective from which students can consider the content of **at least one other unit of study**.

Assessment for this unit consists of a written examination. For more details, see Section 6.

Content	Learning Outcomes
Church authority and division	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the nature of government in the Early Church, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – development of church government in the Early Church with particular reference to the New Testament, the Apostolic Fathers, Irenaeus, Tertullian and Cyprian; – the importance of the Bishop of Rome; and – the development of the threefold ministry and its continuing significance; and • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate heresy in the Early Church, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the origins, nature and teachings of Gnosticism, Marcionism and Montanism; – the response of the church to the challenges faced in the first three centuries: the Rule of Faith, the Canon of Scripture and the succession argument as a threefold defence; and – the work of Irenaeus in his polemic against heresy.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>Synoptic assessment theme: Faith, Morality and the State</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the relationship between religion and the state; • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the lessons that can be learned from current and historical examples in relation to ethical and moral issues; and • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the contribution of religion in resolving conflict and controversy.

Unit A2 5: Themes in the Celtic Church, Reformation and Post-Reformation Church

The first sections of this unit consist of a theme in the Celtic Church followed by a similar theme in the Post-Reformation Church. Students learn about missionary outreach, including the motivation and work of the Celtic Peregrini and the importance of Columbanus. This links to missionary outreach in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the challenges posed by secularisation and atheism. Students also study the theme of controversy and reform through the ages.

In the final theme on faith, morality and the state, students consider the relationship between religious faith and state authority. This includes lessons that can be learned from historical and contemporary examples. The role religion plays in reconciliation is an important issue relating to faith and the state. Students initially study this theme in relation to the Celtic Church and Post-Reformation Church history. It then provides a perspective from which students can consider the content of **at least one other unit of study**.

Assessment for this unit consists of a written examination. For more details, see Section 6.

Content	Learning Outcomes
Controversy and authority	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate Celtic and Roman Christianity, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the wider Paschal Controversy; – events leading to the Synod of Whitby; – the main issues at the Synod; – the significance and outcome of the Synod; and – the dispute between Roman and Celtic Christianity; and • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate Patrick and the authority of Armagh, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Patrick’s association with Armagh; – the background to and nature of the claims of Armagh with reference to the sources; and – how these claims were promoted and the validity of these claims.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>Synoptic assessment theme: Faith, Morality and the State</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the relationship between religion and the state; • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the lessons that can be learned from current and historical examples in relation to ethical and moral issues; and • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the contribution of religion in resolving conflict and controversy.

Unit A2 6: Islam in a Contemporary Context

In this unit, students consider the beliefs and practice of Islam in the context of the modern world. They consider the division between Sunni and Shi'a Islam in the context of its religious and political origins and of its contemporary significance. Students learn about what is common to both groups of Muslims and what is distinctive of each. Students also focus on women and family life, along with 'respect for life' issues.

The final theme is conflict, freedom of belief and orthodoxy. In this theme students consider orthodoxy and interpretations of orthodoxy that construct boundaries around religions and communities. The positive contribution of religion in resolving conflict and controversy is an important issue relating to division and conflict. Students initially study this theme in relation to Islam. It then provides a perspective from which students can consider the content of **at least one other unit of study**.

Assessment for this unit consists of a written examination. For more details, see Section 6.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>Articles of faith</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate belief in God, angels and prophets of God, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – belief about God in the Qur'an: His attributes and nature, particularly His 'oneness' (Tawhid) and the sin of shirk, and His omniscience and omnipotence; – His actions as creator and sustainer; – the teaching of the Qur'an on the nature and role of angels; and – the teaching in the Qur'an about messengers and prophets, including Muhammad, Ibrahim (Abraham) and `Isa (Jesus); and • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate belief in the holy books, afterlife and day of judgement, God's will and predestination, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Muslim beliefs about holy books before the Qur'an; – Qur'anic teaching about the afterlife, the day of judgement and heaven and hell; – the teaching of the Qur'an on the sovereignty of God and predestination; and – how God directs human affairs so that His will is accomplished.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>Origins and beliefs of Sunni and Shi'a Islam</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate Sunni Islam, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – origins of the division between Sunni and Shi'a Islam: the Caliphate and the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs; – different views on succession and leadership; and – political and religious disagreements; • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate Shi'a Islam, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – origins of Shi'a Islam; – its distinctive beliefs and practices: Imams, Salat and Wudu, the Last Imam, the Mahdi, 'Seveners' and 'Twelvers'; – the rituals that take place during the first ten days of Muharram culminating on Ashura; and – the contemporary significance of the division between Sunni and Shi'a Islam;
<p>Contemporary issues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate women and family life, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the nature, purpose and importance of the family in Islam; – role and status of women; – the significance of Surah 4 in relation to the treatment of women; – regulations concerning marriage and divorce; – inheritance rights; – women as participants in and leaders of worship; – the role and status of women in Islam; and – religious and cultural issues surrounding gender equality in Islam; and • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate respect for life issues, including consideration of Islamic teaching in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – abortion; – euthanasia; – suicide; – assisted conception; and – justice, law and punishment.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>Synoptic assessment theme: Conflict, Freedom of Belief and Orthodoxy</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate debates relating to orthodoxy and heresy within religious communities; • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate an investigation of human rights, freedom of belief and the significance of community in maintaining faith; and • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the challenge presented by reformation and change: the positive contribution of religion in resolving conflict and controversy.

3.7 A2 Religion and Ethics

Unit A2 7: Global Ethics

At the start of this unit, students focus on moral theory. This includes the origins and development of virtue ethics and a study of free will, determinism and libertarianism. The moral theory underpins the study of global ethics, focusing on topical issues in the world today.

Students learn about global rights, including the historical development of Christian and secular perspectives on human rights. These focus on sexual identity and gender-related issues. Students examine the nature and purpose of justice and punishment and the problems presented by contemporary warfare as global ethical issues.

In the final theme on conscience, freedom and tolerance, students consider the notion of moral duty and the link between religion and morality. An important issue relating to the capacity for religion to promote tolerance is the question of whether fundamentalism has the opposite effect. Students initially study this theme in relation to religious ethics. It then provides a perspective from which students can consider the content of **at least one other unit of study**.

Assessment for this unit consists of a written examination. For more details, see Section 6.

Content	Learning Outcomes
Moral theory	Students should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate virtue ethics and ethical relativism, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – origins of virtue ethics in the work of Aristotle; – the development of virtue ethics with reference to Anscombe, Foot, MacIntyre and Hauerwas; – examples of application; and – the challenges presented by relativistic approaches in ethics for the Christian and their response.

3.8 A2 Philosophy of Religion

Unit A2 8: Themes in the Philosophy of Religion

In this unit, students explore a number of issues that are relevant to a philosophical assessment of religious belief. Themes in religious language from medieval philosophers to the twentieth century are a focus for study. Students philosophically examine life after death, a central tenet of religious belief. They study the relationship between religion and morality through the contribution of key philosophers and religious thinkers. Students also examine some key twentieth-century movements, including existentialism, humanism and contemporary atheism.

In the final theme on faith, freedom and atheism, students consider theistic and atheistic existentialism, referring to faith and human freedom. The challenges from atheism and secularisation to religious belief are important issues relating to this theme. Students initially study this theme in relation to philosophy of religion. It then provides a perspective from which students can consider the content of **at least one other unit of study**.

Assessment for this unit consists of a written examination. For more details, see Section 6.

Content	Learning Outcomes
Religious language, science and religious belief	Students should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate problems with critique of religious language, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – religious language in medieval philosophy as understood by the terms equivocal, univocal and analogical; – Logical Positivism and the Verification Principle; and – Wittgenstein’s theory of ‘language games’ and the implications of this view for religious language and belief; and • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate religious language, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – religious truth and meaning and the continuing challenge of the scientific method and scientific world view; and – the continuing challenge of evolution, creationism and intelligent design.

Content	Learning Outcomes
<p>Synoptic assessment theme: Faith, Freedom and Atheism</p>	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the relationship between faith and human freedom, including a consideration of atheistic and theistic responses; • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate the assertion that religion is world evading, perpetuating humanity's oppression and alienation; and • demonstrate knowledge and understanding of, and critically evaluate humanist principles and ideas found both inside and outside religion.

4 Scheme of Assessment

4.1 Assessment opportunities

Each unit is available for assessment in summer each year. It is possible to resit individual AS and A2 assessment units once and count the better result for each unit towards an AS or A level qualification. Candidates' results for individual assessment units can count towards a qualification until we withdraw the specification.

4.2 Assessment objectives

There are two assessment objectives for this specification. Candidates must:

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion, including:
 - religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching;
 - influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies;
 - cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice; and
 - approaches to the study of religion and belief (AO1); and
- analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study (AO2).

4.3 Assessment objective weightings

The table below sets out the assessment objective weightings for each assessment unit and the overall A level qualification:

Percentage Assessment Objective Weightings				
	AO1	AO2	AS	A level
AS unit	10	10	20	20
AS unit	10	10	20	20
A2 unit	12	18		30
A2 unit	12	18		30
Total	44	56	40	100

4.4 Quality of written communication

In AS and A level Religious Studies, candidates must demonstrate their quality of written communication. They need to:

- ensure that text is legible and that spelling, punctuation and grammar are accurate so that meaning is clear;
- select and use a form and style of writing that suit their purpose and complex subject matter; and
- organise information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary where appropriate.

Quality of written communication is assessed in all questions.

4.5 Assessment of human experience

Candidates will be required to reflect on the relationship between their units of study and 'other aspects of human experience' at AS level and A2. These 'other aspects of human experience' fall into two categories:

- alternative religious, spiritual and moral teachings, values, beliefs and practices – either historical or contemporary; and
- cultural, social, political, environmental, business, scientific and artistic issues, representing practices and viewpoints – either historical or contemporary.

4.6 Synoptic assessment at A2

Each A2 subject content unit prescribes the themes and content that is to be covered for the synoptic assessment. This is the fourth theme and content of each A2 unit. Synoptic assessment encourages candidates to develop their understanding of the subject as a whole. Each synoptic question will assess the candidates' ability to explore the set theme in relation to **at least one other unit of study and to other aspects of human experience.**

In our GCE Religious Studies, synoptic assessment involves:

- building on material from the AS units;
- reflecting on, selecting and deploying specified knowledge to identify, investigate and analyse questions related to the set theme;
- bringing together and making connections between areas of knowledge and skills that they have explored throughout the course;
- interpreting and evaluating religious concepts in relation to the set theme;
- considering the impact on individuals, communities and societies where relevant in relation to the set theme; and
- using appropriate language and terminology in context.

The set themes for each unit are:

A2 1: Themes in the Synoptic Gospels:

Religious Texts, Authority and Interpretation

A2 2: Themes in Selected Letters of St Paul:

Controversy, Division and Reconciliation

A2 3: Themes in the Old Testament:

Leadership, Text and Alienation

A2 4: Themes in the Early Church and the Church Today:

Faith, Morality and the State

A2 5: Themes in the Celtic Church, Reformation and Post-Reformation Church:

Faith, Morality and the State

A2 6: Islam in a Contemporary Context:

Conflict, Freedom of Belief and Orthodoxy

A2 7: Global Ethics:

Conscience, Freedom and Tolerance

A2 8: Themes in the Philosophy of Religion:

Faith, Freedom and Atheism

4.7 Higher order thinking skills

The A2 assessment units provide opportunities to demonstrate higher order thinking skills by incorporating:

- a wider range of question types to address different skills, for example more open-ended questions;
- more demanding evaluative tasks;
- **questions that require candidates to make connections between sections of the specification; and**
- extended writing.

4.8 Reporting and grading

We report the results of individual assessment units on a uniform mark scale that reflects the assessment weighting of each unit.

We award AS qualifications on a five grade scale from A to E, with A being the highest. We award A level qualifications on a six grade scale from A* to E, with A* being the highest. To determine candidates' grades, we add the uniform marks obtained in individual assessment units.

To be awarded an A*, candidates need to achieve a grade A on their full A level qualification and at least 90 percent of the maximum uniform marks available for the A2 units. If candidates fail to attain a grade E, we report their results as unclassified (U).

The grades we award match the grade descriptions in Section 5 of this specification.

5 Grade Descriptions

Grade descriptions are provided to give a general indication of the standards of achievement likely to have been shown by candidates awarded particular grades. The descriptions must be interpreted in relation to the content in the specification; they are not designed to define that content. The grade awarded depends in practice upon the extent to which the candidate has met the assessment objectives overall. Shortcomings in some aspects of candidates' performance in the assessment may be balanced by better performances in others.

The requirement for all AS and A level specifications to assess candidates' quality of written communication will be met through both assessment objectives.

AS Grade Descriptions

Grade	Description
AS Grade A	<p>For AO1, candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • address the question specifically and demonstrate comprehensive understanding and knowledge; • explain clearly relevant features or key ideas, supported by examples and/or evidence; • write a sophisticated response with a clear and coherent structure; and • use an extensive range of technical language and vocabulary. <p>For AO2, candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • produce a comprehensive response demonstrating an excellent attempt at critical analysis; • respond to the set question using, where necessary, reference to other aspects of human experience; and • construct a sophisticated response with a clear and coherent structure.

Grade	Description
AS Grade E	<p>For AO1, candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • do not address the question specifically and demonstrate limited knowledge and understanding; • show limited understanding of relevant features or key ideas, supported by occasional examples and/or evidence; • write a limited response with limited evidence of structure and coherence; and • use a limited range of technical language and vocabulary. <p>For AO2, candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • produce a limited response demonstrating a modest attempt at critical analysis; • offer a limited response to the set question, which struggles to relate, where necessary, to other aspects of human experience; and • offer a limited response with limited evidence of structure and coherence.

A2 Grade Descriptions

Grade	Description
A2 Grade A	<p>For AO1, candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • address the question specifically and demonstrate comprehensive understanding and knowledge; • use extensive relevant evidence, examples and scholarship; • produce a sophisticated response with a clear and coherent structure; • use an extensive range of technical language and vocabulary; and • demonstrate, for the synoptic assessment, comprehensive understanding and accurate knowledge of the themes with particular reference to at least one other unit of study. <p>For AO2, candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • produce a comprehensive response demonstrating an excellent attempt at critical analysis that addresses the set question; • show an excellent attempt at constructing well-informed and balanced arguments; • show an excellent attempt at providing personal insight and independent thought; • construct a sophisticated response with a clear and coherent structure; and • demonstrate, for the synoptic assessment, an excellent attempt at critical analysis in relation to other aspects of human experience.

Grade	Description
<p>A2</p> <p>Grade E</p>	<p>For AO1, candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • do not address the question specifically and demonstrate limited knowledge and understanding; • use a limited range of evidence, examples and scholarship; • produce a limited response with limited evidence of structure and coherence; • use a limited range of technical language and vocabulary; and • demonstrate, for the synoptic assessment, a limited understanding and knowledge of the themes with limited reference to at least one other unit of study. <p>For AO2, candidates characteristically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • produce a limited response demonstrating a limited attempt at critical analysis that may not specifically address the set question; • show a limited attempt at constructing well-informed and balanced arguments; • show a limited attempt at providing personal insight and independent thought; • offer a limited response with limited evidence of structure and coherence; and • demonstrate, for the synoptic assessment, a modest attempt at critical analysis that struggles to relate to other aspects of human experience.

6 Guidance on Assessment

Within the four areas of study there are 16 external assessment units in this specification, eight at AS level and eight at A2. Candidates choose two from a choice of eight at AS level and two from a choice of eight at A2:

Textual Studies

Unit AS 1: An Introduction to the Gospel of Luke

Unit AS 2: An Introduction to the Acts of the Apostles

Unit AS 3: An Introduction to Themes in the Old Testament

Systematic Study of One Religion

Unit AS 4: The Origins and Development of the Early Christian Church to AD 325

Unit AS 5: The Celtic Church in Ireland in the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Centuries

Unit AS 6: An Introduction to Islam

Religion and Ethics

Unit AS 7: Foundations of Ethics with Special Reference to Issues in Medical Ethics

Philosophy of Religion

Unit AS 8: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion

Textual Studies

Unit A2 1: Themes in the Synoptic Gospels

Unit A2 2: Themes in Selected Letters of St Paul

Unit A2 3: Themes in the Old Testament

Systematic Study of One Religion

Unit A2 4: Themes in the Early Church and the Church Today

Unit A2 5: Themes in the Celtic Church, Reformation and Post-Reformation

Unit A2 6: Islam in a Contemporary Context

Religion and Ethics

Unit A2 7: Global Ethics

Philosophy of Religion

Unit A2 8: Themes in the Philosophy of Religion

The external assessment focuses on candidates' knowledge, understanding and analysis of the content of each unit.

6.1 Units AS 1–AS 8

- There are two examination papers (each from a different area of study).
- The total time for each paper is 1 hour 20 minutes.
- Each paper has two sections: Section A and Section B.
- Candidates answer **one** from two questions in Section A and **one** from two questions in Section B.
- Each question has two parts:
 - part (a) assesses AO1; and
 - part (b) assesses AO2.
- In Section B, the part (b) of the question will focus on **other aspects of human experience**.
- The questions will be marked using the appropriate band descriptors.
- Quality of written communication is written into each band descriptor.

6.2 Units A2 1–A2 8

- There are two examination papers (each from a different area of study).
- The total time for each paper is 2 hours.
- Each paper has two sections: Section A and Section B.
- Candidates answer **two** from three questions in Section A and the compulsory synoptic question in Section B.
- The questions in Section A have two parts:
 - part (a) assesses AO1; and
 - part (b) assesses AO2.
- The compulsory question in Section B has two parts:
 - part (a) relates to the set theme and **at least one other unit of study** and assesses AO1; and
 - part (b) relates to other aspects of human experience and assesses AO2.
- The questions will be marked using the appropriate band descriptors.
- Quality of written communication is written into each band descriptor.

7 Links and Support

7.1 Support

The following resources are available to support this specification:

- our Religious Studies microsite at www.ccea.org.uk
- specimen assessment materials; and
- guidance notes for teachers.

We also intend to provide:

- past papers and mark schemes;
- Chief Examiner's reports;
- schemes of work;
- centre support visits;
- support days for teachers;
- a resource list; and
- exemplification of examination performance.

7.2 Curriculum objectives

This specification supports centres to build on the broader Northern Ireland Curriculum objectives to develop the young person:

- as an individual;
- as a contributor to society; and
- as a contributor to the economy and environment.

It can contribute to meeting the requirements of the Northern Ireland Entitlement Framework at post-16 and the provision of a broad and balanced curriculum.

Curriculum Progression from Key Stage 4

This specification builds on learning from Key Stage 4 and gives students opportunities to develop their subject knowledge and understanding further.

Students will also have opportunities to continue to develop the **Cross-Curricular Skills** and the **Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities** shown below. The extent of this development depends on the teaching and learning methodology the teacher uses.

Cross-Curricular Skills

- Communication:
 - Talking and Listening
 - Reading
 - Writing
- Using Mathematics
- Using ICT

Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities

- Problem Solving
- Working with Others
- Self-Management

For further guidance on the skills and capabilities in this subject, please refer to the supporting schemes of work.

7.3 Examination entries

Entry codes for this subject and details on how to make entries are available on our Qualifications Administration Handbook microsite, which you can access at www.ccea.org.uk

Alternatively, you can telephone our Examination Entries, Results and Certification team using the contact details provided.

7.4 Equality and inclusion

We have considered the requirements of equality legislation in developing this specification and designed it to be as free as possible from ethnic, gender, religious, political and other forms of bias.

GCE qualifications often require the assessment of a broad range of competences. This is because they are general qualifications that prepare students for a wide range of occupations and higher level courses.

During the development process, an external equality panel reviewed the specification to identify any potential barriers to equality and inclusion. Where appropriate, we have considered measures to support access and mitigate barriers.

We can make reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities to reduce barriers to accessing assessments. For this reason, very few students will have a complete barrier to any part of the assessment.

It is important to note that where access arrangements are permitted, they must not be used in any way that undermines the integrity of the assessment. You can find information on reasonable adjustments in the Joint Council for Qualifications document *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments: General and Vocational Qualifications*, available at www.jcq.org.uk

7.5 Contact details

If you have any queries about this specification, please contact the relevant CCEA staff member or department:

- Specification Support Officer: Arlene Ashfield
(telephone: (028) 9026 1200, extension 2291, email: aashfield@ccea.org.uk)
- Subject Officer: Donna Finlay
(telephone: (028) 9026 1200, extension 2105, email: dfinlay@ccea.org.uk)
- Examination Entries, Results and Certification
(telephone: (028) 9026 1262, email: entriesandresults@ccea.org.uk)
- Examiner Recruitment
(telephone: (028) 9026 1243, email: appointments@ccea.org.uk)
- Distribution
(telephone: (028) 9026 1242, email: cceadistribution@ccea.org.uk)
- Support Events Administration
(telephone: (028) 9026 1401, email: events@ccea.org.uk)
- Information Section (including Freedom of Information requests)
(telephone: (028) 9026 1200, email: info@ccea.org.uk)
- Moderation
(telephone: (028) 9026 1200, extension 2236, email: moderationteam@ccea.org.uk)
- Business Assurance (Complaints and Appeals Manager: Heather Clarke)
(telephone: (028) 9026 1244, email: hclarke@ccea.org.uk).

Summary of Changes since First Issue

(Most recent changes are indicated in red on the latest version)

Revision History Number	Date of Change	Page Number	Change Made
Version 1	N/A	N/A	First issue
Version 2	18 December 2017	37 40 43 46 49 52 55 58 62 63 66 67 69	The text 'other units' replaced with 'at least one other unit of study'. 4.6 – line replaced The word 'more' deleted The text 'different units of study' replaced with 'at least one other unit of study'. The text 'and areas of study' replaced with 'and at least one other unit of study'

