

# **GCE Subject Level Guidance for Religious Studies**

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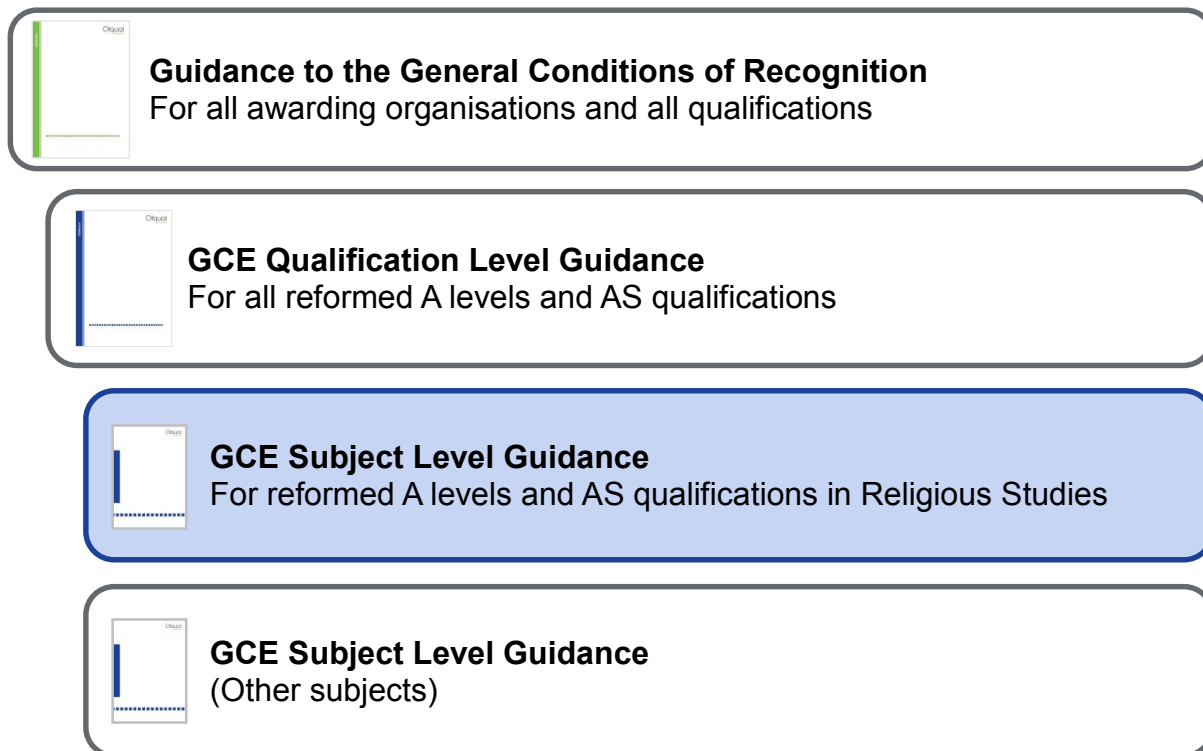


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## Introduction

This document (highlighted in the figure below) is part of a suite of documents which outlines our guidance for awarding organisations offering reformed A levels and AS qualifications.



This document sets out guidance which applies to the following qualifications:

- all GCE A levels in Religious Studies awarded on or after 1 April 2018; and
- all standalone GCE AS qualifications in Religious Studies awarded on or after 1 April 2017.

This guidance supports the *GCE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements for Religious Studies*.<sup>1</sup>

This document constitutes guidance for the purposes of section 153 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 (the '2009 Act') and Condition GCE(Religious Studies)1.2.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-subject-level-conditions-and-requirements-for-religious-studies](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-subject-level-conditions-and-requirements-for-religious-studies)

An awarding organisation has a legal obligation under the 2009 Act to have regard to this guidance in relation to each GCE Qualification in Religious Studies that it makes available or proposes to make available. Condition GCE(Religious Studies)1.2 imposes the same obligation in respect of the guidance below which is issued under that Condition.

An awarding organisation should use the guidance to help it understand how to comply with the GCE Subject Level Conditions and associated requirements for Religious Studies.

## **Guidance set out in this document**

<p>This document provides guidance on comparability of optional routes, and on assessment objectives, for GCE Qualifications in Religious Studies.</p>
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## Guidance on comparability of optional routes through GCE Qualifications in Religious Studies

The subject content for GCE Qualifications in Religious Studies is set out in the Department for Education's *Religious studies AS and A level subject content*,<sup>2</sup> document reference DFE-00041-2015 (the 'Content Document').

The Content Document allows for many different combinations of religions permitting an awarding organisation to develop a GCE Qualification in Religious Studies which has a large number of optional routes through it. Ofqual is particularly mindful of the risks to the comparability of standards that may arise in this qualification as a result of this large number of permitted optional routes.

General Condition G1.2 states that an awarding organisation must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the Level of Demand of an assessment for a qualification it makes available is consistent across all options as to tasks and alternative assessments which may be taken by the Learner for the purpose of the qualification.

Ofqual's *GCE Qualification Level Guidance*<sup>3</sup> states, in relation to Condition GCE2 (Assessment Strategies), that each awarding organisation's assessment strategy should explain how –

optional routes through the qualification... will be comparable in terms of the Level of Demand and the amount of subject content required to be taught and on which Learners will be assessed (D1.1, D1.2(c), G1.2).

We expect an awarding organisation to be able to demonstrate in its assessment strategy for a GCE Qualification in Religious Studies that it has taken all reasonable steps to ensure that it will have maximum control over comparability of standards between different routes at all points within the cycle of setting and marking assessments and awarding the qualification. This control should be such that smaller entry routes are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-as-and-a-level-religious-studies](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-as-and-a-level-religious-studies)

<sup>3</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-qualification-level-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gce-qualification-level-guidance)

## Guidance on assessment objectives for GCE Qualifications in Religious Studies

Condition GCE(Religious Studies)1.2 allows us to specify requirements and guidance relating to assessment objectives for GCE Qualifications in Religious Studies.

We published our requirements in relation to assessment objectives in *GCE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements for Religious Studies*, and reproduce them in the table below.

	Objective	Weighting (A level)	Weighting (AS)
AO1	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, <sup>4</sup> including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching</li> <li>■ influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies</li> <li>■ cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice</li> <li>■ approaches to the study of religion and belief.</li> </ul>	40%	50%
AO2	Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.	60%	50%

We set out below our guidance for the purposes of Condition GCE(Religious Studies)1.2. This guidance explains how we expect awarding organisations to interpret these assessment objectives in terms of:

- the discrete 'strands' within each of the assessment objectives;
- the discrete 'elements' within each assessment objective and its strands that questions and tasks could target and/or seek to credit;

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<sup>4</sup> Throughout this document, the term 'belief' includes religious beliefs and non-religious beliefs as appropriate to the subject content requirements.

- the coverage expectations, such as in relation to the different elements within each assessment objective and how those elements should be sampled over time; and
- the key areas of emphasis in each assessment objective and the particular meaning for the subject of any key terms and phrases used; defined terms are shown in bold text, followed by their definitions.

In line with the obligations set out in Condition GCE(Religious Studies)1.2, we expect awarding organisations to be able to demonstrate how they have had regard to this guidance. For example, an awarding organisation could map how it has regard to the guidance as it:

- develops its sample assessment materials;
- delivers the qualification;
- develops and applies its approach to sampling the elements into which the assessment objectives are divided; and
- monitors the qualification to make sure it addresses all elements appropriately.

AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:			40% (A level) 50% (AS)
Strands	Elements	Coverage	Interpretations and definitions
<b>1 – Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching.</b>	This strand is a single element.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Full coverage in each set of assessments<sup>5</sup> (but not in every assessment).</li> <li>■ No more than 10% of the total marks for the qualification should reward demonstrating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Knowledge and understanding should usually be assessed in combination.</li> <li>■ The strands of this assessment objective represent the different aspects of the subject content in an overarching sense. The weighting of each strand and the extent to which a given strand is reflected within an assessment may vary, depending on the awarding organisation’s approach to assessment design and on the route through the qualification taken by the Learner.</li> </ul>
<b>2 – Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies.</b>	This strand is a single element.		
<b>3 – Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including cause and significance of</b>	This strand is a single element.		

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<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of this guidance, a ‘set of assessments’ means the assessments to be taken by a particular Learner for a GCE Qualification in Religious Studies. For clarity, the assessments taken by Learners may vary, depending on any possible routes through the qualification.



<b>AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching</li> <li>■ influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies</li> <li>■ cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice</li> <li>■ approaches to the study of religion and belief.</li> </ul>			<b>40% (A level)</b> <b>50% (AS)</b>
Strands	Elements	Coverage	Interpretations and definitions
<b>similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice.</b>		knowledge in isolation. <sup>6</sup>	
<b>4 – Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including approaches to the study of religion and belief.</b>	This strand is a single element.		

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<sup>6</sup> Marks that 'reward demonstrating knowledge in isolation' include any mark awarded solely for recalling facts or other knowledge that is part of the specification. It does not include marks awarded for selecting appropriate knowledge (for example, to evidence an argument), or for applying knowledge to a particular context.

AO2: Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.		60% (A level) 50% (AS)	
Strands	Elements	Coverage	Interpretations and definitions
n/a	Analyse aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Full coverage in each set of assessments (but not in every assessment).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ In the context of this assessment objective:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ <b>analyse</b> means deconstructing information and/or issues to find connections between them and to provide logical chains of reasoning;</li> <li>□ <b>evaluate</b> means appraising and/or making judgements with respect to information and/or issues; and</li> <li>□ analysis and evaluation should draw on underpinning knowledge and understanding.</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ <b>Aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief</b> refers to the subject content in an overarching sense, encompassing, as appropriate, the study of religion, textual approaches and philosophical and ethical views.</li> <li>■ The emphasis here is on the Learner constructing coherent and reasoned responses, supported by evidence.</li> </ul>
	Evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.		

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