

GCSE Subject Level Guidance for Religious Studies

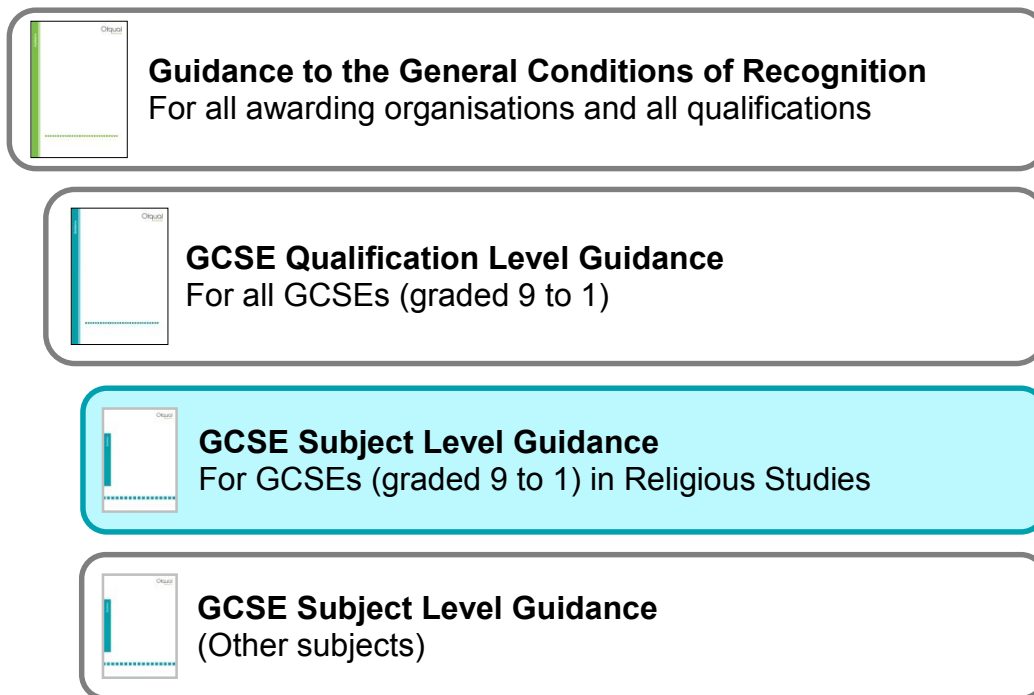
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Introduction

This document (highlighted in the figure below) is part of a suite of documents which outlines our guidance for awarding organisations offering GCSE qualifications (graded from 9 to 1).



This document sets out guidance which applies to all GCSE Qualifications (graded from 9 to 1) in Religious Studies. It supports the *GCSE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements for Religious Studies*.¹

This document constitutes guidance for the purposes of section 153 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 (the '2009 Act') and Condition GCSE(Religious Studies)1.

An awarding organisation has a legal obligation under the 2009 Act to have regard to this guidance, where relevant, in relation to each GCSE Qualification in Religious Studies that it makes available or proposes to make available. Condition GCSE(Religious Studies)1 imposes the same obligation in respect of the guidance below which is issued under that Condition.

¹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-9-to-1-subject-level-conditions-and-requirements-for-religious-studies

An awarding organisation should use the guidance in this document to help it understand how to comply with the *GCSE Subject Level Conditions and Requirements for Religious Studies*.

Guidance set out in this document

This document provides guidance on comparability of optional routes, and on assessment objectives, for GCSE Qualifications (graded 9 to 1) in Religious Studies.

Guidance on comparability of optional routes through GCSE Qualifications in Religious Studies

The subject content for GCSE Qualifications (graded 9 to 1) in Religious Studies is set out in the Department for Education's *Religious studies GCSE subject content*,² document reference DFE-00045-2015 (the 'Content Document').

The Content Document allows for many different combinations of religions, permitting an awarding organisation to develop a GCSE Qualification in Religious Studies that 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 *GCSE (9 to 1) Qualification Level Guidance*³ states, in relation to Condition GCSE2 (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 GCSE 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.

² www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-religious-studies

³ www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-9-to-1-qualification-level-guidance

Guidance on assessment objectives for GCSE Qualifications in Religious Studies

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

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

	Objective	Weighting
AO1	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, ⁴ including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ beliefs, practices and sources of authority ■ influence on individuals, communities and societies ■ similarities and differences within and/or between religions and beliefs. 	50%
AO2	Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief, including their significance and influence.	50%

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

- the different ‘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 – our expectation is that each and every question/task should target or seek to credit at least one of these elements, and may target or seek to credit multiple elements across one or more assessment objectives;

⁴ Throughout this document, the term ‘belief’ includes religious beliefs and non-religious beliefs as appropriate to the subject content.

- 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 GCSE(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:			50%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ beliefs, practices and sources of authority ■ influence on individuals, communities and societies ■ similarities and differences within and/or between religions and beliefs. 			
Strands	Elements	Coverage	Interpretations and definitions
1 – Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including beliefs, practices and sources of authority.	This strand is a single element.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Full coverage in each set of assessments⁵ (but not in every assessment). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ For the short course qualification, it is not necessary for assessments to target all three strands. ■ No more than 20% of the total marks for the qualification should 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The strands are intended to 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.
2 – Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including influence on individuals, communities and societies.	This strand is a single element.		
3 – Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including similarities and differences within and/or between religions and beliefs.	This strand is a single element.		

⁵ For the purposes of this guidance, a 'set of assessments' means the assessments to be taken by a particular Learner for a GCSE Qualification in Religious Studies. For clarity, the assessments taken by Learners may vary, depending on any possible routes through the qualification.

AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:			50%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ beliefs, practices and sources of authority ■ influence on individuals, communities and societies ■ similarities and differences within and/or between religions and beliefs. 			
Strands	Elements	Coverage	Interpretations and definitions
		reward demonstrating knowledge in isolation. ⁶	

AO2: Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief, including their significance and influence.			50%
Strands	Elements	Coverage	Interpretations and definitions
n/a	1a – Analyse aspects of religion and belief, including their significance and influence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Full coverage in each set of assessments (but not in every assessment). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In the context of this assessment objective: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ analyse means deconstructing information and/or issues to find connections and provide logical chain(s) of reasoning,

⁶ 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 religion and belief, including their significance and influence.			50%
Strands	Elements	Coverage	Interpretations and definitions
	1b – Evaluate aspects of religion and belief, including their significance and influence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A reasonable balance between elements 1a and 1b. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ evaluate means appraising and/or making judgements with respect to information and/or issues, and □ analysis and evaluation should draw on underpinning knowledge and understanding. ■ The emphasis here is on the Learner constructing coherent and reasoned responses, supported by evidence.

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