

AS AND A LEVEL

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Accredited Summary Brochure



REFORM – AN UPDATE

GCSE and A Levels reform: An update

The first teaching of new A Levels and GCSEs began in September 2015. We have been accredited by Ofqual for all of our reformed qualifications for first teaching from September 2015. The first teaching of these accredited qualifications is September 2016.

Background to the reforms

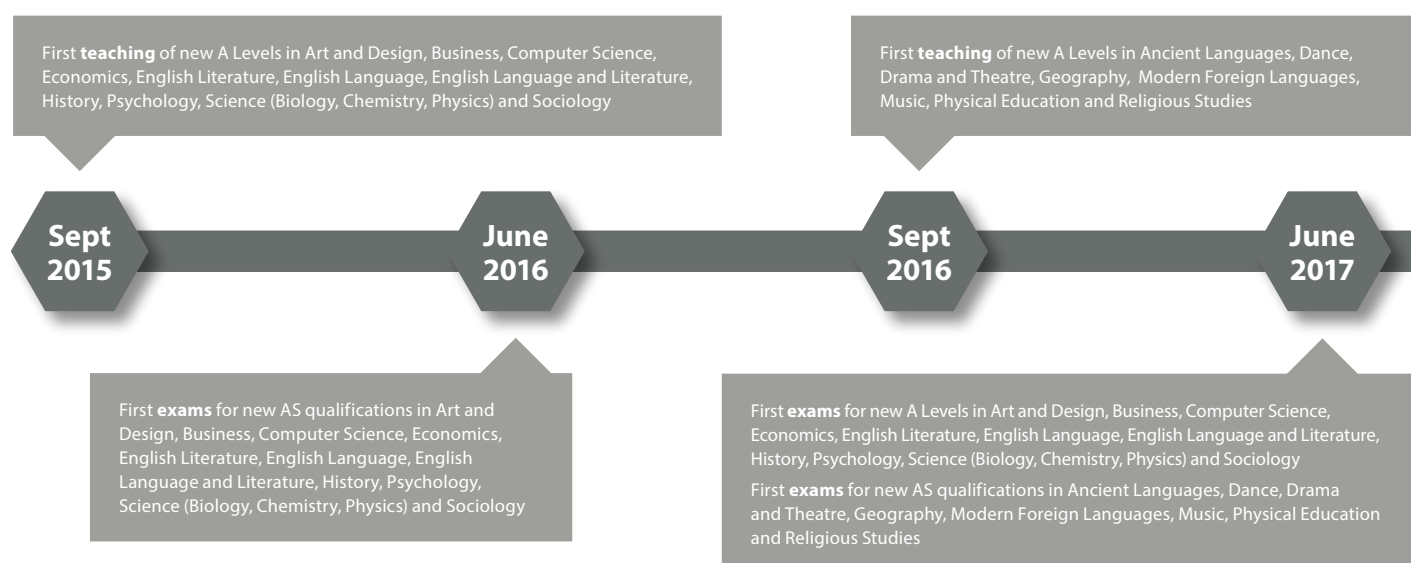
The former Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, initiated the reform of GCSEs and A Levels in February 2013, asking Ofqual to implement changes that would lead to new qualifications.

By reforming GCSEs and A Levels, the Department for Education (DfE) intends to:

- Make the qualifications more ambitious
- Better prepare young people for employment and further study
- Give everyone greater confidence in the integrity and reliability of the qualifications system.

The Government has stated that GCSEs will demand more from all students and that the purpose of taking A Levels is primarily for entry to university – changes are needed so students are better prepared to start their university course.

AS and A Level Timeline



Changes to Assessment

New AS Levels

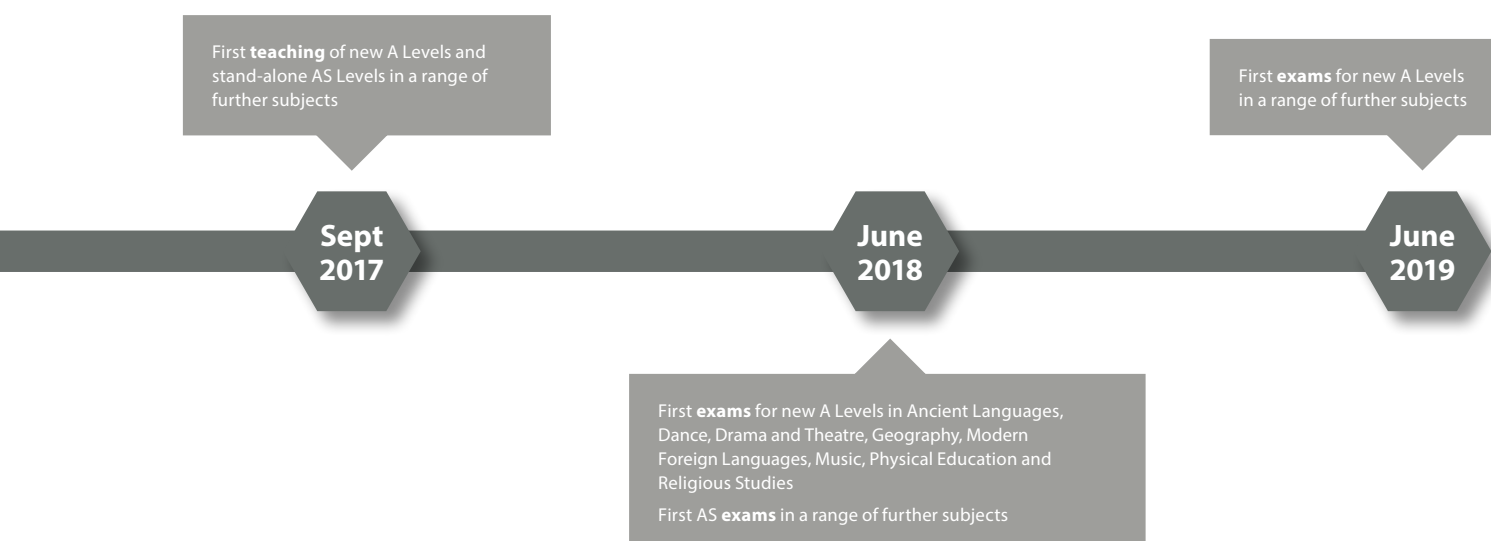
The new AS Levels, for first teaching from September 2016, will be stand-alone qualifications in their own right. They will remain broadly at their current standard. There'll be one examination series each year, with the first assessment planned for June 2017.

New A Levels

New A Levels will be fully linear so assessment of a student's knowledge and understanding of the whole course takes place at the end of two years of study. (There'll be no exams in January.) The first assessment of two-year courses that start in September 2016 will be in June 2018.

The AS will not count towards the final grade of an A Level, where assessment of the whole course will take place at the end of two years' study. However, we are carefully designing our AS Levels to be co-taught with the first year of the A Level. We'll continue to work with teachers and other stakeholders to learn how best we can support you on this reform.

For more information refer to ocr.org.uk/alevelreform



INTRODUCING RELIGIOUS STUDIES CHANGES – AT A GLANCE

AS and A Level Religious Studies

These new AS and A Level courses build on our existing accepted GCSE qualification. More learners take A Level Religious Studies with OCR than with any other awarding organisation in England (2014 entry data/JCQ data). We have based the redevelopment of A Level Religious Studies on our understanding of what works well and we have updated areas of content where improvements could be made. The content changes are an evolution of our current popular specification and areas will be familiar to teachers already following our courses, but are also clear and logically laid out for schools new to OCR.

Our AS and A Level Religious Studies specification will provide your learners with the exciting opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of world religions, and explore philosophy of religion, and religion and ethics. We are striving to inspire learners to engage in relevant topical issues and acquire knowledge and a critical understanding of major issues that are relevant to learners in the twenty-first century.

At OCR, we are passionate about this subject and want to share our enthusiasm and are keen to enable learners to acquire skills that will be prepare learners for higher education or the world of work. Religious Studies offers the unique opportunity to develop transferable skills which will be of benefit across all areas of study. The Russell Group of top universities has made it clear that Religious Studies A Level provides 'suitable preparation for university generally'.

The specification has been designed after engaging with teachers, higher education and consultants resulting in a clear and accessible specification. We appreciate that a new specification may bring challenges and we want to support teachers in delivering this subject with training and a range of quality resources. The OCR Religious Studies team will be assisting you throughout the lifetime of the qualification, along with content developers who have a range of experiences within teaching, assessment and education.

CONTENT OVERVIEW

AS Level Religious Studies

The specification includes exciting content exploring a study of a world religion, ethical issues and debates and the study of philosophical issues and questions raised by religion and belief.

Component title	Content overview
Philosophy of Religion (01)	Learners will study: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ancient philosophical influences• the nature of the soul, mind and body• arguments about the existence or non-existence of God• the nature and impact of religious experience• the challenge for religious belief of the problem of evil
Religion and Ethics (02)	Learners will study: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• normative ethical theories• the application of ethical theory to two contemporary issues of importance
Development in Religious Thoughts (03-07)	Candidates choose one option from: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Christianity (03)• Islam (04)• Judaism (05)• Buddhism (06)• Hinduism (07)

A Level Religious Studies

Component title	Content overview
Philosophy of Religion (01)	<p>Learners will study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ancient philosophical influences • the nature of the soul, mind and body • arguments about the existence or non-existence of God • the nature and impact of religious experience • the challenge for religious belief of the problem of evil • ideas about the nature of God • issues in religious language
Religion and Ethics (02)	<p>Learners will study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • normative ethical theories • the application of ethical theory to two contemporary issues of importance • ethical language and thought • debates surrounding the significant idea of conscience • sexual ethics and the influence on ethical thought of developments in religious beliefs
Development in Religious Thoughts (03-07)	<p>Candidates choose one option from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christianity (03) • Islam (04) • Judaism (05) • Buddhism (06) • Hinduism (07)

WHAT’S STAYING THE SAME, WHAT’S CHANGING?

AS and A Level Religious Studies

Due to new regulatory requirements, there have been changes to the specifications structure, assessment and content.

	What’s staying the same?	What’s changing?
Assessment and Structure	All components are assessed by written examination.	The qualification has compulsory components.
Content	Teachers retain the ability to make choices about which religion to study.	Content across all components has been updated.



ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

AS and A Level Religious Studies

This specification has a simple, clear assessment structure which consists of two written examinations.

AS Level

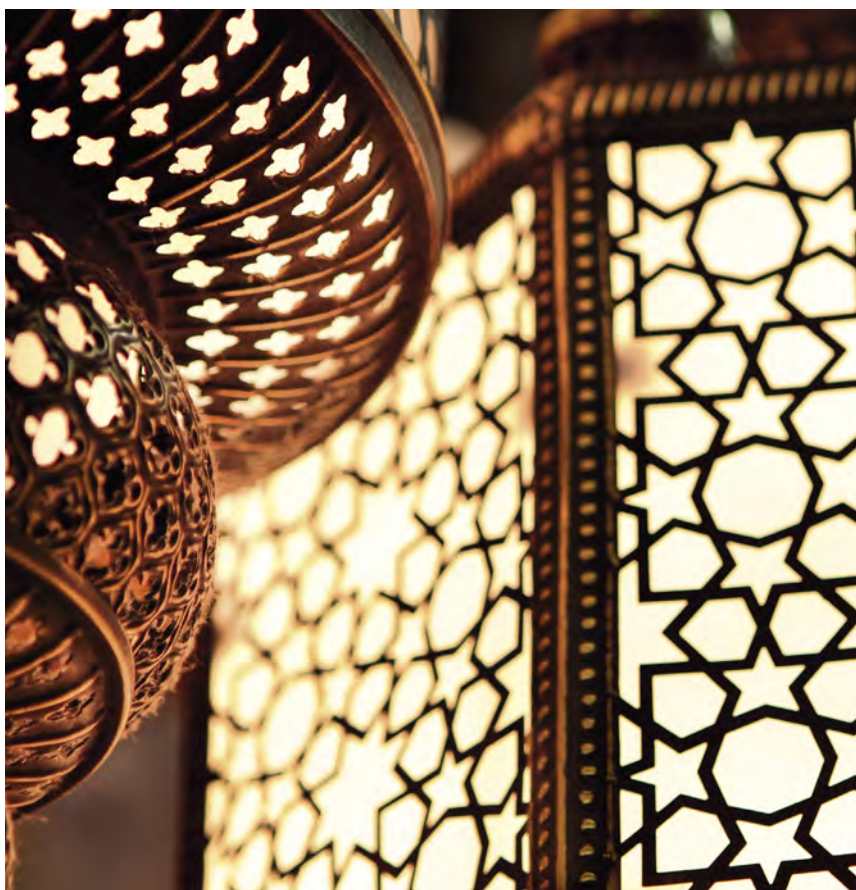
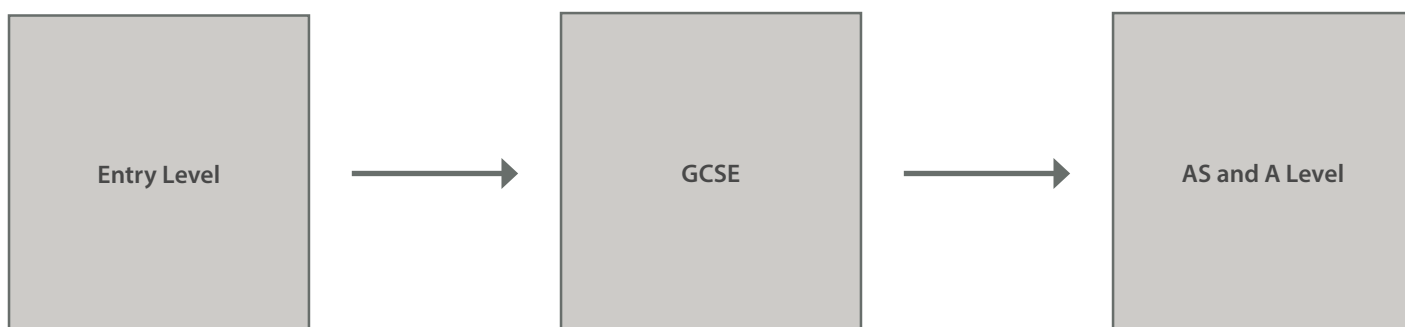
	Component title	Marks	Duration	Weighting
Component 1	Philosophy of Religion	60	1 hour 15 minutes written paper	33.3%
	Two questions from three			
Component 2	Religion and Ethics	60	1 hour 15 minutes written paper	33.3%
	Two questions from three			
Component 3	Development in Religious Thought	60	1 hour 15 minutes written paper	33.3%
	Two questions from three			

A Level

	Component title	Marks	Duration	Weighting
Component 1	Philosophy of Religion	120	2 hours	33.3%
	Three questions from four			
Component 2	Religion and Ethics	120	2 hours	33.3%
	Three questions from four			
Component 3	Development in Religious Thoughts	120	2 hours	33.3%
	Three questions from four			

PROGRESSION PATHWAYS

The new specification will have a clear pathway from Entry Level through GCSE and on to A Level, which will enable students to progress from Key Stage 3 through to Key Stage 4 and on to AS and A Level.



SPECIALIST ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

Resources and support for our AS and A Level Religious Studies qualifications, developed through collaboration between our Religious Studies Subject Specialist, teachers and other subject experts, are available from our website.

Subject Specialist Support

OCR Subject Specialists provide information and support to schools including specification and advice, updates on resource developments and a range of training opportunities.

Subject Specialists work with subject communities through a range of networks to ensure the sharing of ideas and expertise supporting teachers and students alike. Subject Specialists are dedicated to working with developers to help produce specifications and the resources needed to support these qualifications during development, an essential part of which is working alongside teachers through the Teacher Advisory Groups to obtain genuine honest feedback.

You can contact our Religious Studies Subject Specialist for specialist advice, guidance and support.

Meet the team at ocr.org.uk/religiousstudiesteam

Contact them at:

01223 553998

religious.studies@ocr.org.uk

[@OCRexams](https://twitter.com/OCRexams)

To stay up to date with all the relevant news about our qualifications, register for email updates at ocr.org.uk/updates

Religious Studies Community

The social network is a free platform where teachers can engage with each other – and with us – to find and offer guidance, discover and share ideas, best practice and a range of Religious Studies support materials.

To sign up, go to social.ocr.org.uk



Michelle Webb

RESOURCES

Our aim is to help you at every stage of the introduction of a new specification and we're working hard to provide a practical package of support in close consultation with teachers and other experts.

For a start, we'll provide a range of high-quality creative resources. Tailored to the needs of each subject, their focus is on supporting creative teaching approaches and progression for all students. We see our resources as a body of knowledge that will grow throughout the lifetime of the specifications. They are built on the best practice we've identified from our ongoing discussions with the teaching community.

We are also developing exciting new digital tools to help you explore and interact with our resources. The Scheme of Work Builder will allow you to construct personalised schemes of work and you'll be able to add in the specification content, our wide range of resources and teaching suggestions, as well as add your own content and materials.

Please visit our website at ocr.org.uk/reformresources for details of the new tools we are developing and to take a look at the types of resources on offer.

Publisher Partner Resources

We're working with a number of leading publishers who are publishing resources for the new GCSE, AS and A Level specifications for 2016. We're working together to make sure that the resources embed the fundamental content of each specification, while delivering the breadth and depth needed to succeed at GCSE, A Level and beyond.

You can find more details about all our publisher partners and all the resources they're providing on our website at ocr.org.uk/publishing-partners

GCSE AND A LEVEL REFORM TRAINING EVENTS

An introduction to the new specifications

We're running training events throughout the next academic year to help you get to grips with the reformed qualifications for first teaching in September 2016.

Practical events, created with you in mind

These carefully planned events are designed to help smooth the path to the first teaching of reformed qualifications and provide you with an understanding of:

- The new specification content, structure and assessment
- The differences between the existing and new specifications
- The resources and support available for qualifications.

They'll give you the opportunity to speak face to face with our team, and network and discuss teaching approaches with colleagues.

To receive more information about dates, and the wide range of locations as we release them, please register for A Level or GCSE reform email updates at ocr.org.uk/updates



ASSESSMENT PREPARATION AND ANALYSIS SERVICES

We recognise that the introduction of a new specification can bring challenges for implementation and teaching. Our aim is to help you at every stage and we're working hard to provide a practical package of support in close consultation with teachers and other experts so we can help you to make the changes.

Along with subject-specific resources and tools, you'll also have access to a selection of generic resources that focus on skills development, professional guidance for teachers and results data analysis.

Services and tools for AS and A Level Religious Studies:



Subject Specialist Support

Our Subject Specialists provide you with access to specifications, high-quality teaching resources and assessment materials available through ocr.org.uk/alevelreligiousstudies



Active Results

Our free online results analysis service helps you review the performance of individual students or your whole cohort. For more details, please refer to ocr.org.uk/activeresults



Skills Guides

These guides cover topics that could be relevant to a range of qualifications, for example communication, legislation and research.

Download the guides at ocr.org.uk/skillsguides

EXTENDED PROJECT QUALIFICATION (EPQ)

Giving your students the edge

Our **Extended Project Qualification (EPQ)** can provide your students with the skills that universities look for, to help them stand out from the crowd.

Four steps to success



It's straightforward for your students to take our inspiring EPQ. They can enjoy the freedom of working in their own way as they undertake a project based either on a subject they're studying or in an area of personal interest.

With its skills-based assessed assignment, the qualification is ideal for helping students improve transferable skills such as planning, research, analysis and evaluation, and they can take it as part of either an academic or vocational curriculum.

It's the equivalent of an AS Level and designed as a one-year course.

Three reasons to deliver the EPQ

- It's worth up to 70 UCAS points
- There is real flexibility and ease of delivery – it can be taught by non-specialist staff and run over one or two years, and it has two entry points (January and June)
- Fewer guided learning hours than AS Level and requires fewer resources.

Find out more at ocr.org.uk/extendedproject

NOTES

Download high-quality, exciting and innovative AS and A Level Religious Studies resources from ocr.org.uk/alevelreligiousstudies

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