

RECONCILING
CHRISTIANITY
AND ISLAM

Introduction

Welcome to the fourth edition of 'REconnect'. Previous editions have proved very popular with centres and we hope this will be just as useful. Our magazine aims to provide suggestions for teaching the reformed specifications, key information relating to our WJEC/Eduqas Religious Studies qualifications and interesting articles for teachers. If you haven't already done so, visit our resources site to see our free teaching resources: www.eduqas.co.uk/Resources

We hope you find the information contained in the articles useful and that they serve to engage your learners and support your teaching of these courses. Many thanks to those who contributed their ideas to this edition. If you would like to contribute to the magazine with an article, or share a few top teaching tips, please get in touch via e-mail.

We look forward to working with you in the months ahead.

Best wishes

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Using modelling and scaffolding creatively to support students in writing essays

Clare Lloyd

A constant problem that all of us in A level Religious Studies will grapple with is how to help our student produce effective essays. Many students can be great verbally but fall apart when it comes to responding to an examination question. A common response is for us to offer model essays or scaffolds and on reading Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction we must accept that modelling and scaffolding is an effective way to help our students. Online there has been a huge surge in requests for model answers, with many among us attempting to build a model answer bank for the whole specification so that our students have every area covered. However, is this the only or most effective way to support our students' writing?

Rosenshine emphasises that good teaching involves, amongst other things, modelling and scaffolding¹. The great thing about offering model essays is that:

- they can demonstrate the 'best' or 'most effective' method or skill
- they may help a student feel clearer about what they are trying to achieve
- they can provide a template to help a student structure their own work.

A scaffold such as a prefabricated essay plan or a paragraph structure like PEEL can:

- help students coherently order their writing
- build confidence by giving a clear and definite pathway to success
- support a learner as they practice their writing skills.



Yet, model essays can also:

- seriously undermine a student's ability to think independently
- damage their ability to visualise themselves succeeding when the bar is set too high
- cause a student to view a model as the only way to answer a question.

Scaffolds can also:

- cause students to become overly dependent so that they cannot write without it
- restrict the ability for students to develop their ideas further
- become the focus for writing instead of the arguments or knowledge.

Over dependence on models and scaffolding leads to a fixed mindset and if a student does not have faith in their own potential to become able to write effectively on philosophy, ethics or religion, then they may treat these very useful models or scaffolds in one of three ways:

1. They learn to ignore the models and muddle through without learning from them.
2. They fixate on the models, learning and reproducing them in response to any question.
3. They give up trying completely out of a sense that they will never be good enough.

All this negates the great work that models or scaffolds can potentially do. When we give models and scaffolding for our students writing, it is vital that this does not become a straitjacket. Tom Sherrington repeatedly compares our work modelling and scaffolding as being like stabilisers on a bike or armbands in a pool². The scaffolding is there to start us off, but everyone involved should understand that they must be removed eventually. The bike rider who never loses the stabilisers or never has the parent release the saddle will always be confined in their riding and will never be free to go where they wish. Our students must be free to explore lines of argument that we may not have thought of, or question premises that we may unwittingly take for granted.

The plan then must be to move through the year from structured guidance to independence. We can only achieve this by gradually moving from scaffolded support, through partially supported writing toward independent thinking and writing.

There are a range of things that we can do to get the most out of modelling and scaffolding like this.

1. Regular and consistent practice at interpreting questions for themselves. We can begin by teaching them to BUG the question and doing it with them as a class, but then, they need to BUG questions themselves. We should aim for them to be doing this automatically and the only way this will be a habit is by regular practice.
2. Give out model paragraphs rather than whole essays. They can look at a model paragraph, then a partially completed paragraph that has the beginnings of statements which need to be finished. This is



less daunting and enables them to have a go with scaffolding in place before moving on to structure one on their own.

3. We might give out sheets with sentence openers or provide structures like PEEL, SQUID or PETAL³ but students should understand the goal is to remove these later. We can expose students to model paragraphs that use different structures and for them to consider the strengths and weaknesses of each. Students can suggest ideas for how a structured answer could be developed to build their confidence in moving beyond rigid structure.
4. Classes to brainstorm their own essay structures by coming up with a list of lines of argument that they should include, or a list of key ideas that are essential to answering the question. They can then move to doing this alone or under timed conditions. It need not lead to writing the actual essay every time, just practicing quick response planning will help build independent thinking.
5. Give out exemplar essays that are weak or model a few common mistakes. This is great, because we can reinforce our students' learning by showing them what not to do. They can spot the errors, reinforcing what they do know and what they can do and raising their self-esteem. They can also understand that it is acceptable not to produce a perfect response, because we can learn from mistakes more than we learn from getting things right.
6. Sometimes, when my students sit a timed essay, I write my response in real time as they are writing theirs. When their work is marked and we are giving feedback, I get them to mark my work. The intention behind this was originally to see how much writing was realistically expected of them in the time. This leads to a discussion about the need for tidy handwriting and whether there may be more merit in writing less so that it is readable! Then they become the examiners and point out what I have missed, spelling errors, waffle or confused explanation and it becomes acceptable to make mistakes so that we can learn. The classroom becomes a safe space to learn through models because the teacher is honest and can accept analysis and criticism.
7. When discussing how to write a paragraph of analysis and evaluation I would sometimes write one, there and then, on the board in front of them. As I do it, I think aloud and explain that I need to offer counter arguments or that I need to think of an example or evidence to back up my line of argument. We could then go through and highlight the different areas of strength in this live action paragraph. The students can gather around the board and comment on my paragraph and annotate it, then they can go away and attempt their own.

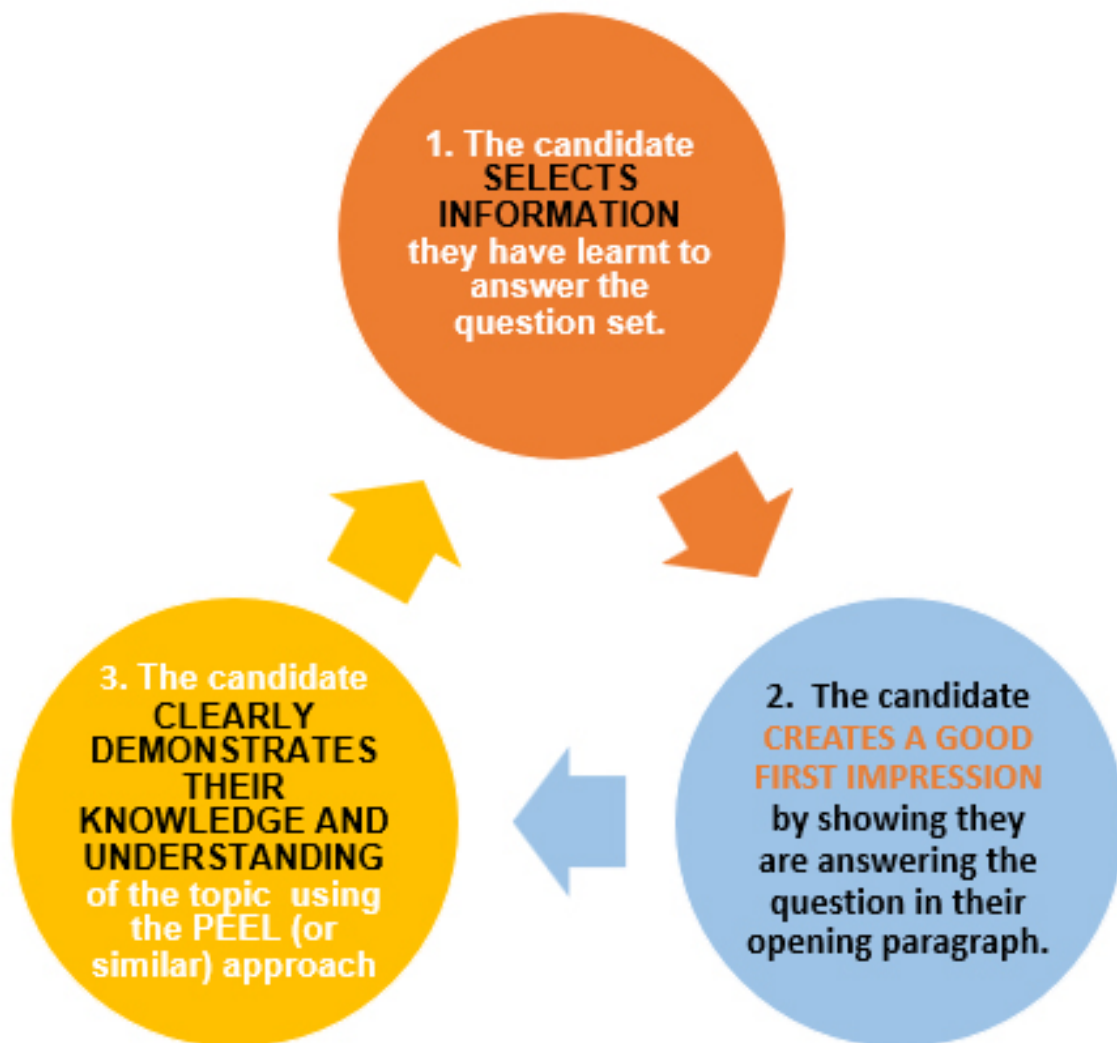
Examiners can see when a candidate has been helped by a structure, and when they have been hindered by one. The structures and models are clearly utilised by the most effective teachers to support our weaker or beginner students, but they are not the most important part of our students' essays. We know we have been successful in our teaching when we enable our students to move beyond these structures to think and write independently about the issues raised by the examination questions.

Clare Lloyd is a teacher of Philosophy, Ethics and Religious Studies with 19-years' experience. She is a CPD presenter and has also spent many years as an examiner of AS, A-level and GCSE.

Clare produces resources for teachers and students from her online business, 'Philosophy Ninja' and is the author of three revision guides for the 'My Revision Notes' series with Hodder.



Developing AOI skills and teacher feedback



What do I need to do?	How do I do this ?
<p>1. You need to select information that you have learnt to answer the question set.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read each question from both sections carefully before deciding which question to answer in each section. • Underline key command words and phrases. • The candidate selects information they have learnt to answer the question set. • Remember - the response needs to be concise and to the point. Don't include irrelevant material which doesn't address the question. • Consider writing a very brief plan / mind map showing where each piece of information will go.
<p>2. You need to create a good first impression.</p>	<p>The introduction is the first impression that the examiner will have of your response – you need to make it a good one.</p> <p>Show that you are answering the question from the start (you might need some definitions or context for words and or events used in the title). For example, if the question was one about applying an ethical theory to the issue of 'euthanasia' then demonstrating that you know what 'euthanasia' is at the start is a good idea.</p>
<p>3. You need to clearly demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of the subject.</p>	<p>PEEL – Point, Explain using Evidence, and Link to the next paragraph.</p> <p>Make a POINT – express the information clearly.</p> <p>EXPLAIN using EVIDENCE.</p> <p>Develop the point you have made and include evidence:</p> <p>Useful 'evidence' phrases include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For example... • For instance ... • In order to demonstrate /illustrate this ... <p>LINK - Make sure your response is logical and flows from one paragraph to another.</p>



What else do candidates need to do?

4. You need to use specialist language and vocabulary in context.	Accurately use specialist language and vocabulary in context – make use of provided 'glossary' words.
5. You need to refer to sacred texts and sources of wisdom where appropriate.	Accurately quote from sacred texts and sources of wisdom (where appropriate).
6. At A level, you need to make connections to other areas of study and refer to schools of thought or scholarly opinion (where appropriate).	Aim to accurately make connections to other areas of study and refer to schools of thought or scholarly opinion (where appropriate).

Important features of a good AOI response

Why is paragraphing important?

- Good paragraphing divides up a candidate's response according to the major points contained within it.
- Each paragraph should discuss a main idea and the examiner should be able to identify what the paragraph is about.
- Each new paragraph should indicate a slight change of focus.
- Paragraphs often start with a topic sentence or part of a sentence – a statement which is expanded on in the rest of the paragraph. The topic sentence acts as a 'signpost' directing your reader through the essay and should also relate back to the question set. For example, if you read the first sentence of each paragraph of a newspaper article you can usually get a flavour of the key points for the whole text.



Linking phrases for paragraphs

Consider using some 'linking' phrases as these help you to build a logical response by linking one paragraph to another. An essay without any linking words reads like a series of unrelated statements with no flow. Phrases such as...

- Initially ...
- Then ...
- This shows that ...
- Subsequently ...
- Following this ...
- Tied to this idea/concept is
- From this we can see that...or ... It follows that ...
- In addition ...
- Furthermore ...
- In particular...

Useful phrases for **COMPARE** questions

(where similarities and differences are required)

Useful link words to use when trying to demonstrate a difference	Useful link words to use when trying to demonstrate similarities
Conversely however even so counter to on the other hand yet on the contrary as opposed to	in the same manner in the same way also likewise both similarlyagree that



Below is just one possible example of an AOI feedback form for Teachers

This may help provide feedback in a concise and meaningful way to students. Particularly when they are beginning to write AS or A level essays.

Overtime, the need to remind students of how to set out an essay should decrease (points 1 to 3) and the focus switch to the AOI skills demonstrated in the content (points 4-7).

AOI Essay Title:				
AOI Feedback				
Important features of a good AOI response	Fully Met	Partially Met	Not Met	Further comments
1. The candidate carefully selects information to answer the question set.				
2. The candidate creates a good impression by demonstrating they are answering the question in the first paragraph.				
3. The candidate clearly demonstrates their knowledge and understanding of the topic using a Point, Explain using Evidence, Link to the next paragraph approach.				
4. The candidate uses specialist language and vocabulary in context.				
5. The candidate refers to sacred texts and sources of wisdom where appropriate.				
6. At A level (where appropriate) the candidate made connections to other areas of study.				
7. At A level, the candidate refers to schools of thought or scholarly opinion				
What did the candidate do well?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 			
How can the candidate improve their next response? (Select a maximum of 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 			



Religious Studies: A View from the Universities

Dr Wendy Dossett

Teachers are no doubt aware of the significant decline over the last few years in the number of students studying Theology and Religious Studies at University. The British Academy recently published a report entitled [Theology and Religious Studies Provision in UK Higher Education](#) which showed a significant fall from the 14,000 enrolled on such degree courses in 2011/12, down to 7,585 by 2017/18. These figures do not pick up all those who are studying religion/theology as part of another degree, but the overall trend is certainly worrying. The fall in numbers taking our subject at A level is likely to further amplify the decline.

TRS-UK, the professional association for all the Higher Education departments of Theology and Religion in the UK, has been working hard with various agencies, such as the British Academy and the Religious Education Council for England and Wales, to better understand the current situation and to develop urgent strategies to address this decline. For example, we are commissioning a series of employability videos to indicate the wide range of careers our graduates enter, and to showcase the unique skills and specialist knowledge-base that our graduates possess. Employers place a high value on these skills. Take, for instance, the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, who recently pointed out that “all of the international evidence tells us [the skills] needed in the future are the things that... artificial intelligence can't do – emotional intelligence, empathy, cooperation, teamwork, critical thinking” [BBC interview 20.10.2019). Learners and their families are rightly focused on qualifications that lead to positive career outcomes. We need to do more to show the ways that our degrees prepare graduates to make a valuable contribution to the world of work.



Teachers can help us address the decline in several ways:

- Signpost Theology & Religious Studies degrees as great degrees! Undergraduates tell us that their teachers are significant influencers of their decisions around subjects and universities. Please use your power well! We think some A level students choose other subjects unaware that Theology & Religious Studies degrees are usually much more aligned with the issues, theories and questions that have excited them at A level.
- Note that the Russell Group of universities no longer uses the term 'Facilitating Subjects.' Tell your Key Stage 3 and 4 students that the new website [Informed Choices](#) indicates the high value of an RS A level for university entry.
- Remember that your local university Theology & Religion department can help you! All of them offer some kind of school engagement; many offer teacher subject knowledge enhancement days, GCSE or A level days for learners, residential conferences and symposia, visits to your school from expert academic staff and/or our fantastically inspiring undergraduate students. You can find out more about your local university by checking out NATRE's [Making Links With Universities](#) page. Do get in touch directly with the departments and let them know your needs.
- Follow TRS-UK on Twitter [@uk_trs](#) and encourage your students (if age appropriate) to do so also. We're running a series called #TRSPeople which showcases the many figures in the public eye who have a TRS degree. Some of them may surprise you!
- Look out for our 'How Can We Help You?' questionnaire for teachers which will be distributed in the coming weeks, and contribute your ideas to developing better routes into the academic study of religions for your students.
- University aspirations develop from a young age. Start talking to your Year 7 students about your own university experience and your knowledge of all the fabulous university departments of Religion & Theology!
- Remember that sitting in our undergraduate lectures are students who owe their presence there to their inspiring RS teacher. They tell us this all the time. You have our enduring gratitude and admiration for all the work that you do.

Dr Wendy Dossett: Schools Engagement for [Theology and Religious Studies UK](#) (TRS-UK)



Responding to AOI Questions – 7 Top Tips

Gregory A. Barker

These insights can help students achieve high marks when answering an AOI question -says Greg Barker

- 1. Make sure the first sentence responds directly to the question – and that this focus is maintained throughout the answer.** The WJEC/Eduqas specification asks you to ‘reflect on, select and apply specified knowledge about religion and belief’. This involves you looking carefully at the question and applying the understanding and knowledge you have learned specifically to that question.
- 2. You do not need an introduction or conclusion for an AOI response.** This does not mean that it is ‘wrong’ to do so. Keep in mind tip (1.) above: you are supposed to directly respond to the question. Having an introduction or conclusion may mean that you end up repeating information – and this repetition will not gain you any extra marks. It is far better to share more relevant knowledge and understanding rather than try to give an introduction or conclusion where you are repeating what you have already said.
- 3. Know the perils and opportunities of using quotations in an answer.** It is great to use a relevant quote in order to strengthen an explanation in an answer to an AOI question. However, keep these facts in mind: (i) you can achieve an A*/A without quotes if you provide relevant, accurate and detailed views of scholars by paraphrasing their ideas. Having said that, a well-paced quotation can be very effective - but do not let the quote do the work for you! Always include an explanation of the quotation and why it is important for the explanation you are making. The board will not award marks for a photographic memory – your examiners want to be assured that you understand the quotation you are using.

4. Use scholars, examples and sources as often as possible to explain key points.

Consider these three qualities of a Band 5 (the highest band) paper:

- thorough and accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom
- excellent use of evidence and examples
- an extensive range of views of scholars/schools of thought used accurately and effectively.

So, where there are scholars and/or sources of wisdom in the relevant subtheme of the specification, you will want to know these. Furthermore, if a scholar in the specification relevant to your question has used examples to illustrate their key ideas, then you would do well to know these examples and write about these in your AO1 answers. If a text book you have used has referred to specific examples to illustrate key ideas, it would also be good for you to know the meaning of these examples and perhaps use these as well. You might also have your own examples to illustrate key ideas or theories – these might be from the news or just from your daily life. Do check with your teachers that your examples are relevant to the ideas you are explaining and, if they are, use them in a part A answer.




- 5. Include specialist language in your answer.** Using specialist language is a sign that you have studied an area with depth. However, you will not be awarded any marks for ‘dropping terms’ into an answer when it is clear that you do not know the meaning of the words you are using. Therefore, this revision guide encourages you to learn ‘Trigger words’ – these words are the specialist language that you need to know to unlock knowledge and understanding effectively for AO1 answers.

- 6. Wandering into biographical details or related subjects – when this is not asked for by the question – will hold you back.** If, for example, you are asked to explain Aquinas’ Natural Law and you discuss where Aristotle lived and his relationship to Plato and Socrates, this will not gain you any marks – even if the information you have shared is accurate. Always remain focused on the question. In this example, you may very well need to say something about how Aquinas uses Aristotle and developed some of his ideas (that would be relevant), but discussions of where Aristotle lived and his relationship to other thinkers of his era would not be relevant.

- 7. For Year 2 Students: include a synoptic link.** This means bringing an idea in from one of the other two areas of the course. For instance, if you are writing an answer to a question in a Philosophy exam, you are encouraged to strengthen one of your explanations from the area of Ethics or from the Religion you are studying. How many links do you need in a paper? There is no magic number. Indeed, trying to ‘shoe-horn’ a link that doesn’t really ‘fit in’ will weaken your paper and you would be better off without trying this. However, one well-placed link in an answer will be fulfilling the highest band: ‘Insightful connections are made between the various approaches studied.’

Gregory A. Barker is a Fellow at the University of Winchester and leads revision events and CPDs at schools and colleges across the country.

Recently added digital resources for GCE RS

	<p>Eduqas A level RS Component 1A Christianity Scheme of Work Yr 2</p> <p>http://tiny.cc/ivftfz</p>
	<p>Eduqas AS RS Component 1A Christianity Scheme of Work</p> <p>http://tiny.cc/o4ftfz</p>
	<p>Eduqas A level RS Component 1E Hinduism (A level Yr 2)</p> <p>Supporting notes for teachers on the Year 2 content A Level Hinduism.</p> <p>http://tiny.cc/rcgtfz</p>
	<p>Thinking Tools</p> <p>A variety of tools that you can use with your students to encourage greater thinking around ideas and concepts that you have taught.</p> <p>http://tiny.cc/tziftz</p>

Exam Dates – GCE

Paper	Date of Exam	Date of Examiners' Conference
AS Component 1 – An Introduction to the Study of Religion (Options A to F)	Friday 15th May	Sunday 23rd May WJEC, 245, Western Avenue, Cardiff
AS Component 2 – An Introduction to Philosophy of Religion	Thursday 21st May	Saturday 30th May WJEC, 245, Western Avenue, Cardiff
AS Component 3 – An Introduction to Religion and Ethics	Monday 1st June	Tuesday 9th June WJEC, 245, Western Avenue, Cardiff

A Level Component 1 – A Study of Religion (Options A to F)	Tuesday 2nd June	Monday 15th June Future Inn, Cardiff Bay
A Level Component 2 – Philosophy of Religion	Tuesday 9th June	Friday 19th June Future Inn, Cardiff Bay
A Level Component 3 – Religion and Ethics	Monday 15th June	Thursday 25th June Future Inn, Cardiff Bay



Other useful links - GCE

Please check the A level RS website for important recent minor updates to the Specification:

<https://www.wjec.co.uk/qualifications/religious-studies/r-religious-studies-gce-asa-from-2016/>

Relaunched Eduqas GCE RS Google map

Due to the new GDPR regulations our previous very successful map had to be removed. Please complete the questionnaire here if you would be interested in setting up a new map which will allow you to contact other centres to share teaching and learning ideas and resources.

<https://bit.ly/2P89nfh>

Eduqas GCE RS future Resource planning:

In order to help us and other providers identify areas of 'greatest need' in terms of resources, please complete the following support request questionnaire:

<https://goo.gl/vMQ2cR>



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Philosophy – The ‘Benign Tumour’ in the ‘Body’ of Religious Education

Leon Robinson

This paper argues that the growth of philosophy within Religious Education is comparable to the growth of a benign tumour in a healthy person. These growths may not be as “benign” as their name suggests. (Ref <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/what-is-cancer/how-cancers-grow#ftpdvr42MWbjv6j8.99>)

Benign tumours have a number of interesting and distinctive characteristics, which resemble the nature and progress of “Philosophy” within the body of RE. Benign tumours usually grow quite slowly. Few, if any RE departments decide on a whim to replace their religious education curriculum wholesale with “philosophy”. The growth of philosophy is slow, and is initially useful, serving RE well with its criticality, its impartiality, and its rigour. Benign tumours don’t spread to other parts of the body. Philosophy’s impact in other areas of the curriculum is negligible. Benign tumours do not cause cachexia (*i.e.* weakness and wasting of the body due to severe chronic illness). The growth of philosophy does not weaken the educational body. It does, however, threaten the integrity and value of Religious Education, as we shall see. Benign tumours usually have a covering made up of normal cells. Philosophy can be disguised as “RE” in a system which fails to recognise the content or the value of “RE”.

Problems start with benign tumours when they grow very large. It is clear that philosophy has grown very large indeed, within the body of RE. Problems worsen with benign tumours when they become uncomfortable or unsightly; Philosophy is taking up space that might otherwise be occupied by a more rigorous pursuit of religious literacy. When benign tumours press on other body organs, things can get even worse; as Philosophy “presses against” other, religious content, the opportunity cost to the specifically religious dimension of RE is considerable. Young people are denied any access to the contributions religions have made to the cultures of the world, lacking any understanding of religious concepts such as the sacred (without which any discussion of the supposed “sanctity of life” can get nowhere); the pursuit of peace, the incalculable power of love and forgiveness, are replaced



too often with the mechanistic (and hopelessly inapplicable) pursuit of utilitarian considerations, or bizarrely de-Christianised “Kantian” ethics.

When benign tumours take up space inside the skull, things have got very serious indeed; when young people in classrooms ask “sceptical” questions about religious traditions of which they are entirely ignorant, they are doing so because a form of “philosophy” is occupying their minds, to the exclusion of sympathetic and informed understanding. Benign tumours release hormones that affect how the body works; similarly, “philosophy” changes the way young people approach other disciplines, sometimes usefully (e.g. when rigorous critical thinking skills are applied to sources), but at other times more covertly, with a damaging, hostile, secularist agenda that is most effective when it is unacknowledged. “Philosophy” as a secular pursuit valorises certain questions while discarding (at least in the Western traditions) the intangible foundations of our civilization’s culture and morality.

Employers recognise the value of religious literacy. For example, in February 2017, EY (one of the largest professional services firms in the world) announced the creation of Religious Literacy for Organisations (RLO); a diversity and inclusion training programme designed to help organisations better understand religious inclusion and its positive impact on business process and performance. It would appear that the provision of religious literacy is important in preparing our young people for the world of work. It seems peculiar, in this context, to find that the specifically religious elements in “RE” are being removed and replaced by a gallimaufry of well-intentioned social studies lessons about the plight of orang-utans, climate change, “moral issues” explored without any reference to religious views, or particularly by forms of “philosophy”. Why this should fall to religious educators is discussed at some length in Conroy et al “Does RE work?” (Bloomsbury, 2013).

British Academy president Sir David Cannadine, speaking on March 31st, 2019, claimed that “Never has an understanding of our spirituality and the role of religion been more important to navigating the challenges we face”. As I have made clear elsewhere (see e.g. Franchi, L. and Robinson, L. (2018) Religious and moral education. In: Bryce, T.G.K., Humes, W.M., Gillies, D. and Kennedy, A. (eds.) Scottish Education. Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, UK, pp. 490-496. ISBN 9781474437844), I believe the specifically religious dimensions (the “R” in “RE”) are what give our subject its unique value. The “spirituality” that Cannadine refers to is given rather short shrift in the secular world. Indeed, more than a quarter of England’s secondary schools do not offer religious education, despite the law saying they must (Ref NATRE Sept 17 2017).

Instead of RE, many schools are offering (or believe they are offering) “Philosophy” in some form or other. And who in their right mind could possibly object to the worship of “Philo-Sophia”, the love of wisdom? Is that not what education is all about? If only it were that simple. Unfortunately, the growth of “Philosophy” has much in common with the growth of those tumours which are called “benign”.

There is a school of thought which defends the teaching of “Philosophy” as being inseparable, or even identical to the development of “Thinking Skills”. This is a fallacious equation, as even the most cursory examination of the content and methods of almost any “philosophy” curriculum will demonstrate. Generic thinking skills might be introduced, indeed ought to be, throughout any school curriculum. Their particular presence in the RE classroom, at the expense of religious content, should be regarded with the scepticism that champions of “philosophy” in the classroom advocate. Why the development of critical thinking skills should fall to RE, when it is the most poorly served and time-starved subject in most schools, is rather peculiar. Perhaps we see part of the explanation for Philosophy’s growth, in a supposedly post-religious age, in which “philosophy” has a cachet that “religion” lacks; RE teachers, many of whom have come to the profession via undergraduate philosophy degrees with minimal religious content, see no problem, but rather revel in the supposedly “superior status” of the subject.

“Philosophy” within RE, however, removes all attempts to understand the cultures of religious



communities, replacing this somewhat anthropological approach with a pseudo-forensic reductive approach which treats religious ideas merely as assertions, to be subjected to scrutiny via the tools of verification and falsification; apparently religious topics such as “the metaphysics of God” (does God exist? And does the idea of God make sense?) replace any attempt to understand the meanings, values and sense of purpose that religions provide for their adherents. There is a lot more to religion than questions about whether claims are “true” or not.

Leon Robinson – Programme Leader: Religious & Philosophical Education, University of Glasgow.



The Middle Way – The Great Compromise

Mark Lambe

Before I start this article, I have a confession to make: 'I'm a Converse-oholic'. What this means is that I love Converse trainers – I own lots of pairs (ok, specifically 20 pairs). I was out in Stockport (my local town) and I saw another pair I'd like to own – just a slightly different shade of green than I currently have. The Converse trainers were priced at £60. However, suddenly a little voice in my head started to say 'that's a waste of money, you already have lots of pairs', so reluctantly I thought I won't buy them, but then the 'Converse-oholic' part of my brain started saying 'buy them you need another pair'. Aaarrgghh, what to do!!

However, I then saw another pair of Converse trainers in the shop that were vastly reduced (down to £10) because were an ex-display pair. Great!! The voice, in my head, that had objected to the original price was quiet because the ex-display pair were much cheaper. Moreover, the 'Converse-oholic' voice was also quiet because I was getting a new pair of Converse trainers. Perfect, I had found the ideal solution by taking the ideal middle way between the extremes of paying too much and not buying any Converse at all.

However, this idea of taking the ideal middle way between two extremes is not a new idea
....

A BUDDHIST EXAMPLE: Siddhartha Gautama (from now on I'll call him the Buddha) grew up in extreme luxury. The Buddha's father did not want his son to follow a religious path – he wanted him instead to be a ruler of men. He believed that if the Buddha saw injustice and suffering, he would go down the religious path. So, the King kept him away from any form of pain by keeping the Buddha in luxury palaces (away from the outside world). However, he became more and more curious about the outside world beyond the extreme luxury of his palaces. Eventually his charioteer, Channa, took him to see the outside world. On these visits he saw 'four sights' that changed his life forever:



Sight 1 - A tired, old man - the Buddha had never seen an old person before. He had no concept of the effects old age had on the body – infirmity, grey hair etc. He was deeply saddened by this discovery.

Sight 2 - A sick man – the Buddha come across a man screaming out in pain with blood poisoning from a fever. The Buddha had never seen sickness before. He was deeply troubled by this discovery.

Sight 3 - A dead body - the Buddha saw a funeral, he had no concept of death before this. He realised that everyone will ultimately die, he was deeply shocked that there was no way to stop death.

Sight 4 - A holy man (monk) – the Buddha had never seen a monk before. He was impressed by the simple and peaceful life the monk led.

The 'four sights' completely changed the Buddha's life. It made him realise that the life of extreme luxury he had been living was not real life, and not even permanent (Anicca). In fact, he realised that real life was full of pain and suffering because of ageing, attachment, sickness and death (Dukkha). He decided his goal in life was now to find an escape from this pain and suffering and achieve enlightenment (the true way of life).

The Buddha eventually realised that the path to enlightenment did not lie in either extreme poverty and hardship nor in extreme luxury and riches. Instead enlightenment was to be found by following the 'middle way'.

OTHER EXAMPLES: This idea of taking the middle ground is not just relevant to those of you taking the Buddhism unit. It is relevant to lots of other areas in your Religious Studies course. For example:

1. Interpretations of the Bible – it could be argued the best way to understand the Bible is to take the middle ground between the extremes of 'literalism' and 'reductionism'. Does it have to be one OR the other? Could it be something of both?
 - Literalism - a belief that Biblical passages plainly and accurately express what actually happened e.g. God created the world in 6 literal days and rested on the 7th, Adam and Eve really did exist as the first people created by God in the Garden of Eden and they were tempted by the serpent.
 - Reductionism – a belief that certain Biblical events never occurred but are in fact just metaphors/allegories e.g. the world developed in 6 time periods, not literal days and the story of Adam and Eve is a metaphor for human development through evolution.
2. Punishment – it could also be argued the best way to understand punishment is to take the middle way between revenge and forgiveness without justice. Is reforming prisoners a way of taking the middle ground?
 - Revenge - punishment should purely be about revenge for what a person has done wrong e.g. some people may support this as an interpretation of the Biblical phrase 'an eye for an eye' in Exodus.
 - Forgiveness – people should always forgive others wrongdoing. For example, in the Biblical book of Matthew, Jesus states 'turn the other cheek' i.e. respond to injury without revenge (but not without justice).



3. Wealth – it could be argued that teachings about wealth take the middle ground e.g. that we should neither be extremely rich (Jesus states in Matthew: “it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God”) nor desperately poor (in Psalm 72 it states “may the mountains bring prosperity to the people”). It’s about how we use our wealth that’s important.
4. Freedom of expression – it could also be argued that freedom of expression is best interpreted as the middle ground between the two extremes of total freedom of speech and expression (thus allowing people to be offensive, if they so wish) and censorship (completely banning freedom of speech).
5. Abortion – furthermore it could be argued that the issue of abortion is best approached from the middle ground of two extremes e.g. a total ban on abortion that would endanger women’s lives and a completely unrestricted approach to abortion may lower the value of life. Euthanasia, at the other end of life, can also be seen to be best approached by the middle way for similar reasons.

A modern supporter of the middle way was Joseph Fletcher (he created a **relativist** approach called ‘Situation Ethics’). He disliked the extremes of having lots of **absolute** rules to guide our ethical lives. This is because it stopped people thinking for themselves. On the other hand, he also disliked the idea of the other extreme that people should ‘do as they like’ without regard for ethics at all. This is because he believed this would lead to people becoming amoral (people would lose all idea of how to be moral). Therefore, Fletcher believed the best solution to ethics was to take the middle ground between these two extremes and use a very important guideline: **to do the most loving thing - AGAPE.**

However, is the middle way always the best approach? Should we always compromise? Are there topics you have covered in your GCSE RS that would not be best approached in this way?



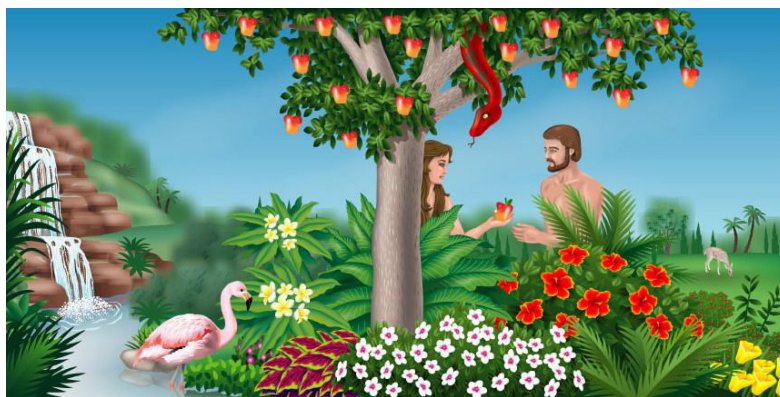
Using Sources of Wisdom and Authority Effectively.

Often, one passage can be used to support many different parts of the specification content. An example is given below.

**Route A Component 1
Relationships**

**Route A Component 1
The World**

**Route A Component 1
The Origin and Value of
Human Life**



Genesis Chapter 2:18 – 3:19

**Route A & B
Component 1
Good, Evil and
Suffering**

**Route A Component 2
& B Component 1
Creation
Route B Component
The Bible**

**Route A Component 2
The Nature of God
Route B Component 1
Origins and Meaning**

Visible Learning: J. Hattie's Theory.




<p>John Hattie argues that errors need to be welcomed. Exposing students to errors in a safe environment can lead to higher performance. Give your pupils an example past paper question to answer, then provide them with this feedback resource to identify any errors and how they can improve.</p>	<p>Hattie implies that feedback needs to enable pupils to learn why they are not progressing (through 'even better if') followed by allowing pupils to note down how they will improve (through 'leaping forward') before finally improving their work through re-writing a paragraph/ a couple of sentences that need improving from their answer (through 'my improvement').</p> <p>https://visible-learning.org</p>			
<p>This 'My Improvement' section is a useful aspect of the feedback resource because it allows the pupil to make links between what they need to do to improve and then demonstrate this understanding. When teaching the GCSE RS spec, teachers can use this resource to give feedback and become 'change agents' who take responsibility for enhancing pupils' learning.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">FEEDBACK Qu. d: "Pilgrimage is out of date". Discuss this statement [15]</p>			<p>An example Past Paper Question (qu. d). You can include any question from the specification.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">WHAT WENT WELL</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">EVEN BETTER IF</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">LEAPING FORWARD</p>	<p>Hattie argues that as a teacher you must provide information on how and why the student has not met the success criteria. So when teaching this unit, teachers must give worthwhile feedback which enables the pupil to understand why they are not meeting the criteria, and what they need to do in order to meet it. This resource gives teachers the ability to both provide information on how and why the pupil has not met the criteria, and to provide strategies to help the student improve.</p>
	<p>You have included some arguments to support & challenge the statement. Structure - point, evidence, explain, evaluate. Some good religious language used.</p>	<p>You have included some arguments to support & challenge the statement. Structure - point, evidence, explain, evaluate. Some good religious language used.</p>	<p>Relevant Sources of Wisdom.</p>	
<p>MY IMPROVEMENT...</p> <p>I musn't just give arguments for and against, I've got to debate the statement and weigh up in what ways it is a true statement and any challenges to that view. So, I have to imagine an argument about the statement between people who hold different opinions about it. At the end I'm going to say who 'wins' the argument – in other words which opinions I think are the strongest and why they are. I'll try and include sources of wisdom but only if they support my points (not just because I know some).</p>				

Exam Dates – GCSE 2020

GCSE RS – Eduqas

Paper	Date of Exam	Date of Examiners' Conference
Component 1 – Religious, Philosophical and Ethical Issues in the Modern World (Route A) and Foundational Catholic Theology (Route B)	Monday 11th May	Tuesday 19th May – Holiday Inn, Manchester
Component 1 – Foundational Catholic Theology (Route B)	Monday 11th May	Tuesday 19th May – Holiday Inn, Manchester
Component 2 – Study of Christianity (Route A)	Tuesday 19th May	Wednesday 3rd June – Future Inn, Cardiff Bay
Component 2 – Applied Catholic Theology (Route B)	Tuesday 19th May	Wednesday 3rd June – Future Inn, Cardiff Bay
Component 3 – Study of a World Faith (Options 1 to 5)	Friday 22nd May	Friday 12th June – Future Inn, Cardiff Bay

Latest Digital Resources for GCSE RS

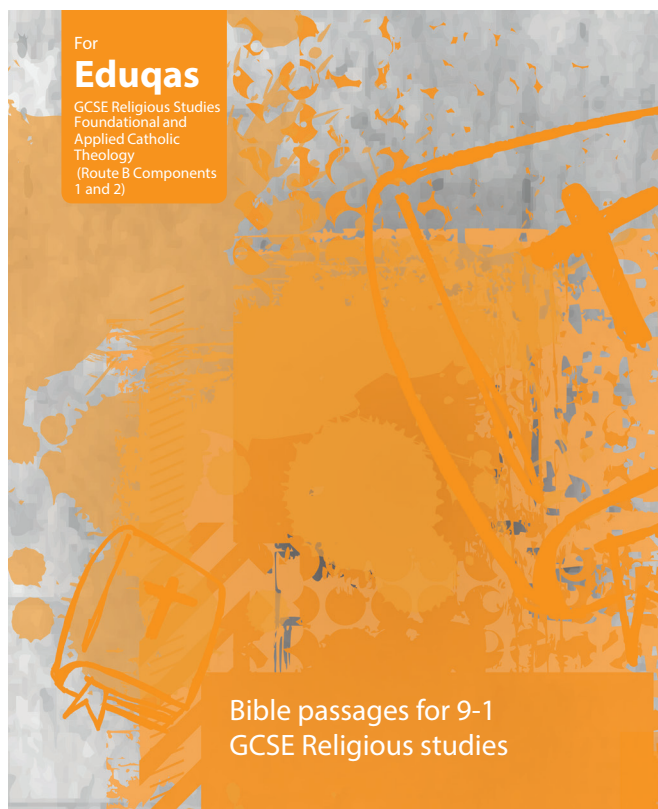
	<p>Comparison Document – Route B</p> <p>https://resources.eduqas.co.uk/Pages/ResourceSingle.aspx?rId=1280</p>
	<p>GCSE Religious Studies Route A: Overview for Students</p> <p>https://resources.eduqas.co.uk/Pages/ResourceSingle.aspx?rId=1276</p>
	<p>Thinking Tools</p> <p>A variety of tools that you can use with your students to encourage greater thinking around ideas and concepts that you have taught.</p> <p>http://tiny.cc/tzitzf</p>

Additional RS resources might be added in future, please visit :

<https://resources.eduqas.co.uk/>



Other useful links - GCSE



A resource to support the delivery of the Sources of Wisdom and Authority in the specification for Eduqas Route B.

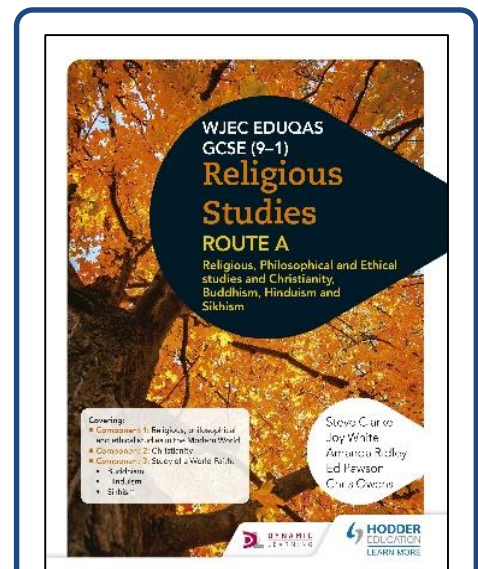
www.sourcesofwisdom.org.uk

WJEC Eduqas GCSE (9–1) Religious Studies Route A: Religious, Philosophical and Ethical Studies and Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism

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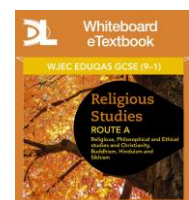
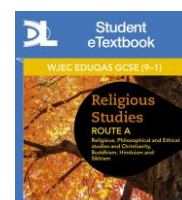
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