



Advanced Higher Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies — draft Course rationale and summary



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Course rationale

Background

All new and revised National Courses reflect Curriculum for Excellence values, purposes and principles. They offer flexibility, provide more time for learning, more focus on skills and applying learning, and scope for personalisation and choice.

In this Course, and its component Units, there will be an emphasis on skills development and the application of those skills. Assessment approaches will be proportionate, fit for purpose and will promote best practice, enabling learners to achieve the highest standards they can.

This Course provides learners with opportunities to continue to acquire and develop the attributes and capabilities of the four capacities as well as skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work.

All Courses provide opportunities for learners to develop breadth, challenge and application, but the focus and balance of the assessment will be appropriate for the subject area.

Relationship between the Course and Curriculum for Excellence values, purposes and principles

This Course will build on the religious and moral education that schools and local authorities provide for all young people up to age 18. The Course complements and extends this by providing an academic study of religion, morality and philosophy in both historical and contemporary contexts. The Course includes a phenomenological study of religion as well as the opportunity to focus on individual world religions. This distinct focus is part of the Course's unique contribution to learner's skills and knowledge.

The Course allows learners to critically analyse the origin and nature of values and beliefs. They will develop and apply insights into religious viewpoints and challenges to these, and will explore theological questions and responses affecting world religions. They will have the opportunity to develop an informed and secure sense of their own values. The Course also allows learners to develop an understanding and respect for different faiths, beliefs and values.

Through the Course, learners are enabled to develop the four capacities in many respects. For example, learners' horizons are extended and they are challenged to look at religious moral and philosophical aspects of the world in new ways. Their confidence grows as they begin to understand more about their sense of identity and place in the world.

The Course will do this by developing knowledge, understanding and skills, and offering insights into human beliefs, values and behaviour and how religion, morality and philosophy can help people find meaning and purpose in life.

In developing these four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence, the Course will also provide opportunities for learners to develop skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work. These include an advanced level of literacy as they engage with challenging texts and produce extended written arguments and conclusions. They will develop personal learning as they work independently to research religious, moral and philosophical issues. Discussing and debating issues involved in the Course will develop learners' skills in working with others. Developing understanding and respect for different views can develop a sense of responsible citizenship.

At Advanced Higher the focus is on depth of knowledge and understanding, and the opportunity for detailed and in-depth study of religious, moral or philosophical issues. This enables learners to explore challenging abstract ideas through engaging with a wide range of source material, by evaluating and synthesising information. This depth of study affords them a unique opportunity of intellectual engagement with the subject matter.

Purpose and aims of the Course

The purpose of this Course is to provide a focused academic study of religion, morality and philosophy in both historical and contemporary contexts. It will provide candidates with the opportunity to extend and apply the skills they may have learned at Higher and elsewhere. Candidates will develop knowledge and

understanding of religious, moral and philosophical questions and principles. Religious and other perspectives will be included.

The main aims of the Course are to enable learners to:

- ◆ develop a mature and self-directed approach to learning, working on their own initiative to research, investigate and evaluate sources, synthesising information to create responses to religious, moral and philosophical issues
- ◆ develop in-depth analytical knowledge and understanding of some key theological or philosophical issues found within religions today, and the ways in which religions have responded
- ◆ develop in-depth analytical knowledge and understanding of permeating themes and debates in ethics
- ◆ develop in-depth analytical understanding of the context of religious, moral and philosophical responses to issues
- ◆ experience an intellectually challenging opportunity to deepen knowledge and develop higher-level thinking skills required to analyse, synthesise and respond to religious, moral and philosophical ideas

The Units cover the key themes of the subject area. Through completing the Units and the Course assessment learners will carry out extended and self-directed studies of religious, moral or philosophical questions. This will enable them to demonstrate planning, organising and investigating skills and evaluate the aims and objectives of their research.

The Course will help learners develop an understanding of the background to significant religious, moral and philosophical issues relevant to the contemporary world. This will help learners gain an awareness and understanding of the religious and social diversity of society. Learners will develop skills which are transferable to other areas of study and which they will use in everyday life.

Information about typical learners who might do the Course

This Course is appropriate for a wide range of learners, including those who wish to achieve a greater understanding of religion and its place in society; those who want to learn more about the traditions, beliefs and values of religions; and those who wish to progress to more specialised study, further education, training or employment.

Entry to this Course is at the discretion of the centre. However, it may be beneficial for learners to have attained the skills and knowledge required by the Higher Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies Course, the Higher Philosophy Course or equivalent qualifications.

By undertaking this Course, learners will develop a wide range of important and transferable skills including: interpreting and analysing texts or sources; enquiring into and critically evaluating different traditions, beliefs, ideas and viewpoints; explaining and analysing religious and philosophical questions and responses to these; learning independently; expressing views about religious, moral and philosophical issues in a reasoned and structured manner; synthesising information; extended essay-writing; and independent and critical thinking.

successful learner, confident individual, responsible citizen, effective contributor

Learners will gain considerable experience in higher order thinking skills through tackling issues that require interpretation of complex information and analysis and evaluation of these interpretations. They will also develop the ability to synthesise and create responses to religious, ethical and theological issues.

Learners will experience a multi- disciplinary subject which is relevant to aspects of social subjects, science, language, and health and wellbeing. Learners will develop understanding of how religion, ethics and philosophy are at the core of human history and culture and continue to have a significant impact on the world today.

This Course or its components may provide progression to a wide range of degrees in a diverse range of subjects including theology, philosophy, law, politics or related areas.

This Course is recognised as an entry qualification to employment, training, and higher and further education. This Course also provides preparation for a diverse range of occupations and careers.

Course summary

Course title: Advanced Higher Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies

SCQF level 7 (32 SCQF credit points)

Course outline

Mandatory Units

This Course comprises the following mandatory Units:

Religion: Interpretations and Issues (Advanced Higher)	8 SCQF credit points
Philosophy of Religion: The Existence of God (Advanced Higher)	8 SCQF credit points
Personal Study (Advanced Higher)	8 SCQF credit points

Course assessment **8 SCQF credit points**

This Course includes eight SCQF credit points to allow additional time for preparation for Course assessment. The Course assessment covers the added value of the Course. Further information on the Course assessment is provided in the Assessment section.

Course structure and conditions of award

Course structure

The Course develops a range of cognitive and analytical skills. It encourages active, independent and co-operative learning in the process of examining religious, moral and philosophical issues. It is a requirement that learners acquire and apply knowledge and understanding of these issues. Learners will be provided with the opportunity to reflect upon their own beliefs and the beliefs of others. Learners will do this through the in depth study of religious and other perspectives.

The skills listed above will be developed and applied over a range of multidisciplinary contexts in the following Units. Each Unit also offers opportunities for learners to focus on particular skills.

The Course has three mandatory Units. Within each Unit there is a considerable degree of flexibility in themes which can be studied to allow personalisation and choice.

Units are statements of standards for assessment and not programmes of learning and teaching. They can be delivered in a number of ways.

Religion: Interpretations and Issues (Advanced Higher)

This Unit has as its focus theological/philosophical issues which permeate all world religions and which create debate amongst adherents. The theological issues are the Nature of the Ultimate Reality, the Nature and Destiny of Humanity and the Nature and Status of Scripture. Learners will develop an understanding of how these key theological issues are found in a range of the world's six major religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism) and how these issues have shaped the religions and impacted on the beliefs of its adherents. Learners will develop skills to understand the diversity of belief which exists within world religions.

Philosophy of Religion: The Existence of God (Advanced Higher)

In this Unit, learners will develop skills to explain and critically analyse questions relating to the existence of God through an examination of the moral argument, the ontological argument and the argument from miracles. Learners will develop an in-depth knowledge and understanding of these arguments and key responses to them. They will learn to compare their relative strengths and weaknesses.

Personal Study (Advanced Higher)

In this Unit, learners will develop a range of independent research skills in the context of a religious, moral or philosophical topic from a choice of options. The learner will develop the investigative skills of planning, researching, collecting and recording information, analysing, organising, synthesising, presenting effectively and evaluating their research.

Conditions of award

To gain the award of the Course, the learner must pass all of the Units as well as the Course assessment. The required Units are shown in the Course outline section. Course assessment will provide the basis for grading attainment in the Course award.

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Assessment

Information about assessment standards for the Course is included in the *Course Assessment Specification* which provides full details including advice on how a learner's overall attainment for the Course will be determined.

Unit assessment

All Units are internally assessed against the requirements shown in Unit specifications.

They can be assessed on a Unit-by-Unit basis or by combined assessment.

They will be assessed pass/fail within centres. SQA will provide rigorous external quality assurance, including external verification, to ensure assessment judgments are consistent and meet national standards.

Exemplification of possible assessment approaches for these Units is provided in the *National Assessment Resource*.

Course assessment

Courses from National 4 to Advanced Higher include assessment of [added value](#)¹. At National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher, the added value will be assessed in the Course assessment. The added value for the Course must address the key purposes and aims of the Course, as defined in the Course Rationale. It will do this by addressing one or more of breadth, challenge and application.

In the Advanced Higher Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies Course, added value will focus on:

- ◆ challenge
- ◆ application

The learner will draw on, extend and apply the knowledge and skills they have learned during the Course. This will be assessed by a [question paper](#)² and a [project](#)³. The question paper will require demonstration of a breadth of knowledge, understanding and skills accumulated from across the Course. The project will require learners to extend and apply their knowledge and skills and will be sufficiently open and flexible to allow for personalisation and choice.

¹ Definitions can be found here: www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/45528.html

² See link above for definitions.

³ See link above for definitions.