



Advanced Higher Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies

Draft National Course Specification



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Please refer to the note of changes at the end of this Course Specification for details of changes from previous version (where applicable).

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Course outline

Course title: Advanced Higher Religious Moral and Philosophical Studies

SCQF: level 7 (32 SCQF credit points)

Course code: to be advised

Mandatory Units

All candidates will study the following **two** mandatory Units.

Philosophy of Religion (Advanced Higher) 8 SCQF credit points
Researching Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies (Advanced Higher) 8 SCQF credit points

Candidates will also study **one** of the following **two** optional Units:

Religion and Ethics (Advanced Higher) 8 SCQF credit points
Religious Experience (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.

Recommended entry

Entry to this Course is at the discretion of the centre. However, learners would normally be expected to have attained the skills, knowledge and understanding required by the following or equivalent qualifications and/or experience:

- ◆ Higher Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies Course or relevant component Units
- ◆ Higher Philosophy Course or relevant component Units

Progression

This Course or its components may provide progression to:

- ◆ Degree courses in Theology, Religious Studies and related social subjects areas
- ◆ Higher National Certificates in a range of subjects
- ◆ a diverse range of careers

Further details are provided in the Rationale section.

Equality and inclusion

This Course Specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence. For further information, please refer to the *Course Support Notes*.

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Rationale

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. Learners will develop understanding of how religion, morality and philosophy are at the core of human history and culture and continue to have a significant impact on the world today. This distinct focus is part of the Course's unique contribution to developing learners' skills and knowledge.

This Course requires 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 enduring questions and responses affecting world religions. They will have the opportunity to develop an informed and secure sense of their own values. This Course also allows learners to enhance their understanding of, 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.

This 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.

This 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 learners 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 higher-order critical thinking skills. This enables learners to explore challenging abstract ideas by engaging with a wide range of source material to evaluate and synthesise information. This depth of study affords them a unique opportunity of intellectual engagement with the subject matter.

This Course gives learners the opportunity to build on and extend knowledge and skills that they may have gained from a wide range of different disciplines and subjects, or from earlier experiences in Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies at lower levels. This Course provides learners with an opportunity to apply and synthesise skills and knowledge in their appraisal of the role of religion, morality and philosophy in the modern world.

Purpose and aims of the Course

The purpose of this Course is to develop knowledge and understanding of religious, moral and philosophical principles, questions and responses. It will provide learners with the opportunity to apply the skills they have learned at Higher and elsewhere in the curriculum. Learners will be introduced to a rigorous study of religion, morality and philosophy in both historical and contemporary contexts. Both religious and non religious perspectives will be included.

This Course will require learners to look in depth at the philosophy of religion, ethical issues, or religious experience topics and undertake in-depth personal research into a chosen topic

This Course will help learners develop an understanding of significant religious, moral and philosophical issues relevant to the contemporary world. This will help learners gain an in-depth understanding of significant ethical, theological and philosophical themes, and of society's religious and social diversity. Learners will develop skills which are transferable to other areas of study and which they will use in everyday life.

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

- ◆ develop a self-directed approach to learning, working on their own initiative to research, analyse, evaluate and synthesise complex information in response to religious, moral and philosophical issues
- ◆ apply and synthesise skills and knowledge in relation to the role of religion, philosophy and morality in the contemporary world
- ◆ develop in-depth analytical knowledge and understanding of some key philosophical issues found within religion today, and the ways in which religions have responded
- ◆ develop in-depth analytical knowledge and understanding of themes and debates in religion and ethics
- ◆ develop in-depth analytical understanding of religious experience and responses

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 learn to evaluate the aims and objectives of their research.

Information about typical learners who might do the Course

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

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. The Higher Psychology Course and the Higher Sociology Course may also provide meaningful progression into this Course.

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

RMPS Units and Courses are offered from SCQF level 3 to SCQF level 7. Vertical progression is possible through the levels of Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies qualifications.

Learners will gain considerable experience in higher order thinking skills by tackling issues that require interpretation of factual information and analysis and evaluation of these interpretations. They will also develop the ability to synthesise complex information and respond to religious, moral and philosophical issues.

Learners will experience a multi-disciplinary subject with connections to other areas such as social subjects, science, language, and health and wellbeing.

The skills, knowledge and understanding developed in the Course are particularly transferable to degree-level programmes in a range of subjects such as philosophy, medicine, theology, social sciences and law.

Course structure and conditions of award

Course structure

This 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. Learners will acquire and apply knowledge and understanding of these issues and will be provided with the opportunity to reflect upon their own beliefs and the beliefs of others.

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

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

The skills listed above will be developed and applied over a range of multidisciplinary contexts in the following Units.

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

Philosophy of Religion (Advanced Higher) — mandatory Unit

In this Unit, learners will develop skills to explain, critically analyse and evaluate key theological and philosophical questions from the philosophy of religion. They will develop in-depth knowledge and understanding of how these questions and responses to them have shaped religions and impacted on the world.

Researching Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies (Advanced Higher) — mandatory Unit

In this Unit, learners will develop a range of investigating skills while undertaking independent research. Learners will develop a range of skills such as scoping or identifying appropriate research topics; how to plan and manage a complex programme of research; techniques to source, collect and record appropriate and reliable information; techniques to present findings using appropriate academic conventions; and how to evaluate research methodology.

Religion and Ethics (Advanced Higher) — optional Unit

In this Unit, learners will develop skills to explain and critically evaluate a range of ethical and moral issues and responses. Learners will develop in-depth knowledge and understanding of ethical issues and religious and non-religious responses. The Unit requires candidates to explore themes and concepts that underpin moral issues and to be able to apply and relate these to the issues studied.

Religious Experience (Advanced Higher) — optional Unit

In this Unit, learners will develop skills to explain, critically analyse and evaluate a range of issues concerning religious experience and responses including religious, scientific, anthropological and sociological perspectives. Learners will develop in-depth knowledge and understanding of different perspectives on religious experience.

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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Skills, knowledge and understanding

Full skills, knowledge and understanding for the Course will be given in the *Course Assessment Specification*. A broad overview of the mandatory subject skills, knowledge and understanding that will be assessed in the Course is given in this section.

This covers:

- ◆ working independently to research, analyse, evaluate and synthesise complex information from a wide range of sources to produce clear, well-reasoned, well-informed and structured written work that demonstrates an in-depth understanding of religious, moral or philosophical issues
- ◆ explaining and applying interpretations of the context and relevance of sources and making well-reasoned and detailed judgements
- ◆ explaining, analysing and critically evaluating issues arising from the philosophy of religion, responses from religious and other perspectives, and the impact of these issues
- ◆ enquiring into, critically evaluating, and expressing clear, well-reasoned, well-informed and structured views about responses to religious and moral issues
- ◆ in-depth analytical knowledge and understanding of the significance and impact of religion today through the examination of different perspectives on religious experience

Skills, knowledge and understanding to be included in the Course will be appropriate to the SCQF level of the Course. The SCQF level descriptors give further information on characteristics and expected performance at each SCQF level (www.sqa.org.uk/scqf).

Assessment

Information about assessment 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 the Unit Specification.

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

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

The assessment of the Units in this Course will be as follows:

Philosophy of Religion (Advanced Higher) — mandatory Unit

The learner will be required to provide evidence of:

- ◆ in-depth analytical knowledge and understanding of complex arguments from the philosophy of religion
- ◆ critically analysing complex arguments from the philosophy of religion
- ◆ explaining and critically evaluating a range of responses to arguments from the philosophy of religion

Researching Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies (Advanced Higher) — mandatory Unit

In this Unit, the learner will be required to give evidence of:

- ◆ the ability to carry out independent research on complex religious, moral or philosophical issues

Religion and Ethics (Advanced Higher) — optional Unit

The learner will be required to provide evidence of:

- ◆ in-depth analytical knowledge and understanding of complex arguments from key religious and ethical issues
- ◆ critically analysing some key religious and ethical issues and the impact these have on the world today
- ◆ explaining and critically evaluating a range of responses to key religious and ethical issues

Religious Experience (Advanced Higher) — optional Unit

The learner will be required to provide evidence of:

- ◆ in-depth analytical knowledge and understanding of the nature, significance and impact of religious experience
- ◆ critically analysing some key aspects of religious experience

- ◆ explaining and critically analysing a range of responses to religious experience

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 or 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 depth of knowledge, understanding and skills 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 definition.

³ See link above for definition.

Development of skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

It is expected that learners will also develop broad, generic skills through this Course. The skills that learners will be expected to improve on and develop through the Course are based on SQA's *Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work* and drawn from the main skills areas listed below. These must be built into the Course where there are appropriate opportunities.

1 Literacy

- 1.1 Reading
- 1.2 Writing

3 Health and wellbeing

- 3.1 Personal learning

4 Employability

- 4.6 Citizenship

5 Thinking skills

- 5.3 Applying
- 5.4 Analysing and evaluating

Amplification of these skills is given in SQA's *Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work*. The level of these skills will be appropriate to the level of the Course. Further information on building in skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work for the Course is given in the *Course Support Notes*.

Administrative information

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Superclass: to be advised

History of changes to National Course Specification

Course details	Version	Description of change	Authorised by	Date

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