

Coursework and Teachers' guide

**Edexcel Advanced Subsidiary GCE in
Religious Studies (8562)
Edexcel Advanced GCE in Religious Studies
(9562)**

June 2000

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Authorised by Sue Parker

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Introduction

This Guide is designed to assist teachers of Edexcel's Advanced Subsidiary GCE and Advanced GCE specifications in Religious Studies. It also contains, in Appendices 2 and 3, guides to help students in their coursework and essay writing.

In particular the guide gives advice on:

- the delivery of coursework
- the delivery of the synoptic module.

It is hoped that candidates for this Advanced GCE will have been encouraged to widen their knowledge and appreciation of Religious Studies and will have been excited by its potential contribution, not only to their own further education, but also to their understanding of the richness of its insights into life and into their existence as persons.

Overview of the specification

Aims

The AS and A2 specifications in Religious Studies encourage students to:

- develop an interest in and enthusiasm for a rigorous study of religion
- treat the subject as an academic discipline by developing knowledge and understanding appropriate to a specialist study of religion
- use an enquiring, critical and empathetic approach to the study of religion.

Assessment Objectives

Candidates will be assessed on their ability to achieve the following objectives:

Assessment Objectives		Weighting %		
	Students should be able to:	AS	A2	Advanced GCE
AO1	Select and demonstrate clearly relevant knowledge and understanding through the use of evidence, examples and correct language and terminology appropriate to the course of study. In addition, Advanced GCE students should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the connections between different elements of their course of study.	70	60	65
AO2	Sustain a critical line of argument and justify a point of view. In addition Advanced GCE students should relate elements of their course of study to their broader context and to specified aspects of human experience.	30	40	35

In each AS/A2 unit the assessment objectives will have the weightings given above.

Some units are subdivided into separate sections. Where this occurs students are required to be assessed on one section only.

The Advanced Subsidiary (AS) consists of three modules of study:

- one compulsory module (Module 1) which is assessed by written coursework which is externally marked; and
- two modules (chosen from five) assessed by written examinations with a total examination time of 3 hours.

The full Advanced GCE qualification is made up of the three AS units plus three more units (A2):

- one compulsory module (Module 12) assessed by a written synoptic examination of 1½ hours; and
- two modules (chosen from five) assessed by written examinations with a total examination time of 3 hours.

Coursework

This module will be assessed by one piece of coursework with a recommended length of 2,000 to 2,500 words. This will be externally marked.

Coursework topics **must** be drawn from the list of approved coursework titles found in this Guide. Coursework titles not on the approved list will require Edexcel approval, using the *Coursework Approval Form* on page 41 of this publication. **Titles may be based upon units being studied for the AS or based upon other relevant AS Religious Studies units as appropriate. However, duplication and direct overlap between the content of the coursework topic and the content of the examined course must be avoided.**

Coursework should be originally written by the student and certified, by the centre, as the student's own work. It should include a bibliography of materials indicating:

- sources consulted, and
- sources more fully used.

Although teachers will be responsible for the authentication of a student's coursework as the student's own work, teachers will be able to provide some initial guidance. For example this may include:

- defining topics
- suggesting possible approaches
- discussing ideas.

Teacher guidance should, however, be limited to the extent that teachers are still able to authenticate the work as the student's own original work.

Using the *Coursework Approval Form*, centres are required to submit the title of the student's proposed piece of coursework for approval by Edexcel **if the title is not on the approved list.**

For a coursework title to be approved it must:

- indicate the precise area or aspect of the topic which is being considered
- show, either through its wording or in the elaboration of sub-headings, how it fulfils the aims of the specification and the two assessment objectives.

The Coursework Approval Forms can be submitted at any time during the course **but by no later than 15 December in the calendar year preceding the examination.** The forms will normally be returned to centres four weeks after submission.

The Coursework Approval Forms, should be re-submitted **with the completed coursework** to the Examiner allocated to your centre by **1 May in the year of the examination.**

Nature of the Coursework

The student will plan and complete the coursework with appropriate guidance from the teacher. When completed it will be externally assessed by Edexcel.

The coursework is an integral and compulsory part of the specification and is allocated 33.3% of the total marks for the AS. Within the parameters of the specification, Edexcel does not intend to be rigidly prescriptive over the content of the coursework. It wishes to encourage students to design imaginative essays, making use of a wide variety of resources. This format of study offers students the opportunity to pursue their own enquiry into a Religious Studies topic, question or issue to be assessed in a range of skills including their powers of investigation, selection and reflection on the material.

Introductory Guidance

The topics stated in the specification for each Module indicate the general areas available for study. The following procedure will encourage candidates and teachers to identify an acceptable coursework title (and to complete the Coursework Approval Form accordingly).

The criteria for approval of a coursework title are:

- (a) it must be introduced by the relevant topic number from the specification,
- (b) it must
 - (i) indicate the precise area or aspect of the topic which is being considered.
 - (ii) show, either through its wording or in the elaboration of a sub heading, how it fulfils the specification aims and assessment objectives.

The candidate must indicate the sources (a) consulted and (b) more fully used. The teacher must certify that the essay is the candidate's own work.

Choosing a coursework title

The selection of a coursework title will depend on:

- (i) its coherence with the relevant aims and assessment objectives of the specification and with the topics listed for study in the Unit concerned;
- (ii) the availability of resources, eg books, organisations, representatives and media sources (centres may find it useful to develop a bank of resources for certain topics)
- (iii) the student's interests;
- (iv) the suitability of the topic for such a form of study;
- (v) the adequacy of the time for such a form of study;
- (vi) the viability of the study in relation both to its weighting at 33.3% of **the total** marks available for the AS and to any financial costs of the study.

Filling in the Coursework Approval Form

(A copy of the Form is included on page 41)

One of the purposes of the approval procedure is to help candidates to clarify the structure of their coursework by elaborating and explaining how it relates to the assessment objectives. This procedure should encourage candidates to undertake systematic and thorough planning at an appropriately early stage of their AS course and so to build upon skills gained in GCSE.

The proposed coursework title should be sufficiently well-focused to meet the assessment objectives. Although there are many expressions of a satisfactory title, some candidates may find it helpful to formulate their title as:

- a question, with subsidiary points;
- a dilemma;
- a comparative/contrasting issue.

The candidate should produce a draft of the proposal early enough to allow for it both to be amended in the light of discussion with the teacher, and to be approved by the Chief Examiner. The Chief Examiners have three options on the Approval Form, they can:

1. approve the title, or
2. approve it subject to specified advice being taken into account, or
3. not approve it for reasons that will be stated.

In considering the information given on the Approval Form, the Chief Examiners will ask themselves:

1. does the title cohere with the relevant aims, and the AS specification?
2. does the content duplicate, or overlap improperly, the AS specification?
3. will the title enable the candidate to satisfy the assessment objectives?
4. is the title sufficiently focused so as to clearly identify the precise topic?

These forms can be sent to the Chief Examiner allocated to a centre at any time during the course but by no later than 15 December in the calendar year preceding the examination. The forms will normally be returned to centres four weeks after submission. In the case of any re-submissions, the forms must be sent to the same Chief Examiner for the necessary approval.

The Role of the Teacher

At the conclusion of the Coursework Statement of Authentication the teacher must certify that the coursework is the candidate's own work. A copy of this form is included on page 44.

There are two aspects of such certification. Firstly, the candidate will be involved in using material written by other people. The teacher should assist the candidate in being aware of the distinction between the improper use of copied material and information obtained by research; the distinction lies in the use made by the candidate of the information obtained and the acknowledgement of sources.

Marks are awarded for knowledge and understanding of the material; consequently the improper use of copied material which show little or no understanding will fail to gain marks. Furthermore, the coursework assessment criteria are intended to encourage the candidate to sustain a critical line of argument and justify a point of view.

A second aspect of the certification is the role of the teacher in the candidate's study. The following guidance is offered to the teacher about the appropriateness of any involvement:

1. The coursework is not being carried out solely for the purpose of assessment; it is an integral part of the teaching/learning process. It is important that consultations take place between the teacher and the candidate, at key stages of the work, about the *procedures* for making progress.
2. It is expected that the teacher may be asked by the candidate for guidance about specific matters. There is no objection to such teacher involvement provided that the candidate identifies and acknowledges the assistance received.
3. The initial guidance should cover such issues as:
 - choosing an appropriate topic for enquiry
 - formulating a precise title so as to focus the enquiry
 - exploring some of the considerations in locating, selecting and evaluating sources.
4. After the work has begun, the teacher may be asked by the candidate for advice when situations arise which make it difficult or impossible for the candidate to carry out some aspects of the original plan or when it becomes necessary or desirable to modify the plan.

5. Before the work is completed the teacher may be asked by the candidate to discuss a variety of conclusions, which could not have been anticipated before the work began. Again such a discussion would not be inappropriate, provided that the candidate is not advised to adopt one conclusion and also acknowledge the teacher's help.
6. At all times, the teacher should exercise sufficient supervision to be in a position to judge the authenticity of the candidate's work.
7. In supervising the candidate's work, the teacher must ensure that the candidate is aware of the necessity to acknowledge all assistance and sources of information which have been used.
8. The coursework submitted must, with the stated exceptions, be the candidate's own work
9. Regulations and guidance relating to candidates with particular requirements are published annually by the Joint Council for General Qualifications and are circulated to Examinations Officers. In accordance with the published guidelines, Edexcel will assess whether special consideration or concession can be made for candidates with particular requirements. Requests should be addressed to:

Special Requirements
Edexcel Foundation
Stewart House
32 Russell Square
London WC1B 5DN.

Presentation of Coursework

1. The presentation of the coursework must reflect the assessment objectives
2. The presentation of the coursework is an important part of the learning and assessment process. The work must be legible and candidates are strongly recommended to write a draft that they can then edit in order to produce the final, corrected edition.
3. Candidates must select the appropriate ways to present the information (e.g. in the form of diagrams etc.) and the supplement their written work with relevant material (e.g. photographs etc.)
4. They must select material from their investigation which is explicitly related to the title. Irrelevant embellishment for its own sake will not gain additional marks!
5. Candidates must plan and structure their work in such a way as to marshal the evidence in the most appropriate form. If appropriate, they may subdivide the work into sections.
6. Candidates are recommended to formulate a conclusion as distinct from a mere summary of their findings, which, for example, may reflect the development of their thinking on the topic over a period of time and answer the question posed in the title of their coursework.
7. Candidates should clarify any key terms and expressions and some topics may lend themselves to the incorporation of a glossary.

8. Candidates are recommended to make a careful note of their sources during the process of investigating the topic. Texts in languages other than English may be used, but quotations should be translated into English. They must acknowledge, via footnotes or end-notes, all their sources and references. The **bibliography** should include a detailed list of all books, articles, newspapers or other sources consulted with **date and publisher and/or place of publication**.
9. They must provide details of any other sources used such as assistance received from persons consulted, unpublished correspondence, visits etc. By means of these well-established academic procedures, candidates can avoid the dangers of plagiarism.

Assessment of coursework

Coursework will be externally assessed by Edexcel.

Each piece of coursework will be assessed out of a total of 50 marks according to the following criteria, which match the appropriate Assessment Objectives.

Assessment Objective 1

Select and demonstrate clearly relevant knowledge and understanding through the use of evidence, examples and correct language and terminology appropriate to the course of study.

35 marks

Level 1	Coursework represents no accurate or relevant knowledge	0
Level 2	Uncritical presentation of knowledge, demonstration of the limited ability to identify and select the most relevant/important information and therefore reflecting little/no understanding. Any knowledge presented is in a simplistic form	1 - 9
Level 3	Presentation of a selection of relevant material which reflects some understanding of the important features of a topic. Some use of specialised religious language in appropriate contexts.	10 - 18
Level 4	Clear and obvious understanding of the topic set in an appropriate context, for example the religious, cultural, historical and/or social background. Topic explored using defined and relevant religious terms reflecting a fuller understanding.	19 - 26
Level 5	Excellent use of factual material, from a variety of sources, verifiable through references, demonstrating a full understanding of the topic. Topic explored with the proficient use of religious language.	27 - 35

Assessment Objective 2

Sustain a critical line of argument and justify a point of view.

15 marks

Level 1	No attempt to develop a line of argument and/or justify a viewpoint.	0
Level 2	Limited awareness of issues involved and of need to assess and evaluate different views presented.	1 - 3
Level 3	Some attempt to present a viewpoint with some explanation of choice.	4 - 7
Level 4	Presentation of evidence of knowledge of more than one point of view/response to the topic. A satisfactory assessment is presented with line of argument verified by references as appropriate and comparison of relative strengths and weaknesses of viewpoints.	8 - 10
Level 5	Substantiated conclusions drawn from a line of argument with full justification of viewpoint. Knowledge, understanding and explanation of a full range of views/responses to the topic.	11 - 15

1. In awarding marks, examiners will assess positively, i.e. to assess achievement, not the lack of it.
2. The completed Coursework Approval Form and the associated coursework should be submitted to the examiner allocated to the centre by **1 May** in the year of the examination. Detailed instructions regarding submission procedures will be sent to centres in the spring of the year of the examination.

3. The coursework will be returned to the centre after the publication of examination results.
4. Centres will be issued with the coursework marks of their candidates.

Implications of coursework for teaching and learning

Administration of Coursework

Practical matters that centres will need to consider include

- the structure of the coursework programme
- strategies for getting all coursework completed and handed in
- record keeping of pupil's work
- strategies to cope with breaks in continuity
- staff/pupils leaving/joining the centre
- strategies to cope with re-sit candidates.

Time allowance

For the AS approximately 66% of the assessment is by written examination and approximately 33% is assessed by coursework.

The requirement to submit coursework to Edexcel by 1 May in the year of the examination dictates an end to coursework before Term 3, effectively allocating the last term for the written examination preparation.

Teachers are recommended to adopt a coherent approach to the specification as a whole, whereby the objectives and the skills should be seen as reinforcing and supporting each other. Candidates will require adequate time to complete their coursework. It is possible that student overload would result from course planning which regarded the completion of coursework largely as a task for student private study time. It is entirely appropriate for staff to monitor and supervise coursework and this will enable staff to authenticate the work as the student's own.

Management and Organisation of Student Workloads

Students may experience problems with the management of coursework. Some problems result from poor motivation or poor time-management by students themselves, but many are the result of genuine over load of students. Among the causes of this overload are:

- coincidence of setting and completion dates from a number of subjects, and
- subject staff making demands exceeding specification requirements for assessed coursework ostensibly in students' 'best interests'.

Some suggestions for overcoming these problems:

1. be aware of the loads posed by other subjects and make other subject teachers aware of yours. Awareness of significant dates and management of loads to avoid too many competing deadlines will be important.
2. sensitivity to, and monitoring of, students' success in coping with coursework targets is important. It is to be hoped that the majority of students are well motivated and more

mature than their fifteen and sixteen-year-old counterparts and one would expect them to be better able to organise their own learning. However, they have an acute awareness of the extent to which coursework matters at AS/A level. Fear of not making the grade can be a crucial inhibitor in producing work.

3. avoid too much emphasis on 'assessed' work. It is anticipated that students may complete as part of their coursework programme some work that is not offered for final assessment. Much will be concerned with developing and understanding the abilities; much will relate to areas of the coursework programme which provide the context for the issues from which assessed pieces of work will arise.

While any appropriate work could be offered as evidence of attainment in relation to the objectives, most students will find it helpful to be clear that not all work will be assessed. They will benefit from a break from the stress of assessed work.

It is, of course, desirable for the students to have a number of opportunities to demonstrate the extent of their attainment - for each piece of work not to be seen as a 'life or death' chance with possible fatal effects on grades! But it will be important to strike a balance between:

- creating a number of opportunities so that each piece of work is seen not as a tremendous hurdle but as an integral part of their course.
- setting so many pieces of work that coursework is a tremendous burden for students and staff.

Ideally, coursework should arise naturally from the specification and take place naturally within it. It should be an integral part of the specification, not a series of additional disparate hurdles.

Approaches to Teaching and Learning

1. An enquiry-based approach to teaching and learning

This specification provides opportunities for an enquiry-based approach to learning. It seeks to:

- involve students as active participants
- provide possibilities for open-ended enquiry
- identify questions, issues and problems as the starting point for enquiry
- present opportunities for enquiries using a wide range of source material
- provide scope for an effective balance of both teacher-directed work and more independent student enquiry
- present opportunities for the development of a wide range of skills and abilities.

2. Providing a variety of approaches in teaching, learning and assessment

While there has been scope within traditional specifications to inject considerable variety into teaching methods and learning activities, it has often been argued that there has not been time. What is certainly the case is that the scope to reflect a variety of in-course activities, such as educational visits, has been generally lacking in the assessment pattern. It could be done but it didn't 'count' - hence was there really time?

The creation of the opportunity for schools to design their own pattern of coursework should have removed much of the headlong rush to cover the specification which many teachers have complained acted as an inhibitor to good teaching and teaming at AS/A level.

It is possible within the assessment pattern for this specification both to vary the nature of material with which student's work and to credit the work they do. If a wide range of source material is used - oral evidence, film archive, artefacts etc., students' ability to use and evaluate the source material can form part of work that is assessed.

It is possible to vary the nature of the tasks they complete and can gain credit for; for example by including records of educational visits.

Preparation for A2 synoptic assessment

Students will be expected to draw together their knowledge and understanding of the connections between different modules from across their full Advanced GCE programme of study.

Students are required to study ONE of the 32 topics listed in the advanced GCE specification. The study should develop the students' knowledge and understanding of the connections between different modules. Students should explicitly draw together the knowledge, understanding and skills learned in different modules of this Advanced GCE course. They should also relate such connections to their broader context and to specified aspects of human experience. The content, which forms the basis for these connections, is specified in Modules 2 - 11. Students will select and adapt the relevant content and skills so as to meet the synoptic demands of AO1 and AO2.

1. Details of synoptic assessment

From 2002 onwards all A2 examinations in Religious Studies will have a paper on **synoptic assessment**.

Candidates are advised to spend approximately 40% of their A2 learning time on the synoptic assessment. The reason it is 40% is that this is the proportion of marks allocated to synoptic assessment within the A2 part of the course, though taking into account the AS assessment it is worth 20% overall. So without a doubt this is a crucial part of their A level studies and it is worth more than any other single examination or coursework essay.

There are two assessment objectives for A2 including the synoptic assessment. The following assessment objectives, which are not italicised, apply to any mode of assessment at A2 ie the unit exams. Those in italics refer to the distinctive contributions of synoptic assessment.

AO1 - the weighting is 60%

Candidates should be able to select and demonstrate clearly relevant knowledge and understanding through the use of evidence, examples and correct language and terminology appropriate to the course of study. *Candidates should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the connections between different elements of their course of study.*

A02 - the weighting is 40%

Candidates should be able to sustain a critical line of argument and Justify a point of view. *Candidates should relate elements of their course of study to their broader context and to specified aspects of human experience.*

Candidates will be required to answer ONE question in one and a half hours.

2. Reading and note-making for synoptic assessment

Preparation for the synoptic area is properly part of the delivery of the other elements studied in the Religious Studies course. From that basis, time will be required to develop and practice the skills required for synoptic assessment.

An important part of this process is for candidates to adapt their reading and note-making skills around the requirements of synoptic assessment. For example, they can read sources for a variety of purposes. One such activity is to re-read selected parts of chapters/books and their own previous notes with the intention of interrogating the material in terms of its potential use for synoptic assessment.

Candidates could formulate the following questions so that they probe sources with particular purposes in mind:

- (i) what are the potential links and connections in the source with my other elements of my course?
- (ii) what is the relationship of the material to its broader context?
- (iii) what is the relationship of the source to specified aspects of human existence?

With these types of questions they could *scan* their sources. That is searching the material for particular points of interest. When they identify potentially useful material it may then require a more detailed scrutiny.

From this type of literature search they can begin to build up a personal record/portfolio which systematically records their understanding of issues relevant to synoptic assessment.

There are many techniques of note-making and creating a personal record and their portfolio of notes etc, must serve the well-defined purpose of meeting the demands of synoptic assessment. It is this purpose that will influence their choice of methods of note-making. For example, two possible ways to begin are the 'relevance tree' and the 'knowledge map'.

The relevance tree

This is a way of developing connected ideas from a starting concept or theme. The intention is to see at a glance the relationship of key words and themes and to discriminate between degrees of relevance to the initial concept/theme. Such a technique enables candidates to think about which themes are worth developing compared to those which may be more peripheral or indeed irrelevant. They could employ their own selected symbols to indicate the degrees of relevance such as:

- ≡ important links
- = potential links
- questionable relevance.

Knowledge map

This is a way of creating a 'map' of their synoptic area. The candidate locates the 'regions' which meet the synoptic requirements. They should ask the following types of questions:

- (i) what is the best route to follow e.g. is the most direct the best or is it preferable to take 'the scenic route'?
- (ii) what is the most effective scale at which to inspect the territory, such as how much time is required to spend on certain areas?
- (iii) are there any relationships between different areas even if they do not appear immediately contiguous?
- (iv) are there symbols/colour schemes to highlight points worth noting and of interest?

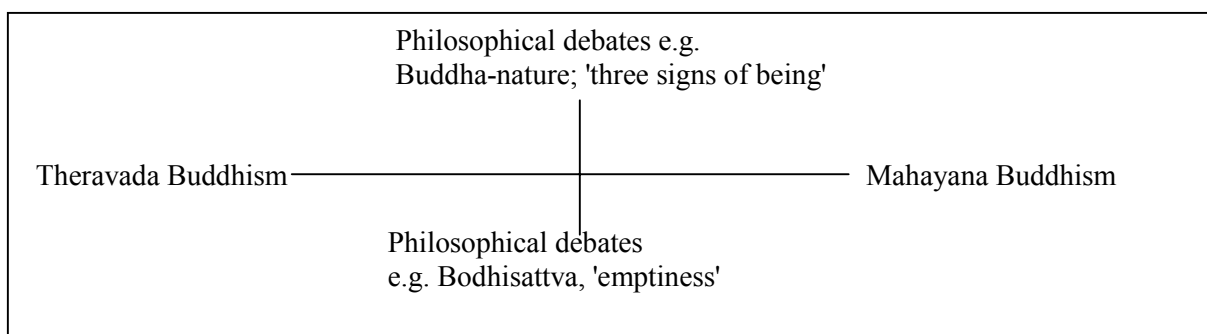
Their portfolio should help them clarify how best to analyse the connections between different elements of their course. There are various models they could employ regarding the relationships between concepts and themes. For example:

- (i) do the beliefs have some degree of overlap:
eg the possibility of some relationship between religious and moral language (as in Topic 3)?
- (ii) are the beliefs inclusive of each other:
eg New Testament studies and selected beliefs about miracles (as in Topic 6)?
- (iii) are the beliefs identical with each other: e.g. an argument to show there are generic links between 'founders' across different religious traditions (as in Topic 18)?

- (iv) are they quite separate and distinct from each other: e.g. beliefs about God in western theistic religions compared, to views about such beliefs within some forms of Buddhism which may be sceptical of theism (as in Topic 3)?
- (v) can a matrix be constructed which considers connections which contain variables (as in Topic 5)? See following diagram.

Philosophy of Religion	
arguments for and against belief in life after death	resurrection
New Testament	
interpretation of evidence for belief in life after death	resurrection

- (vi) can a 2-dimensional graph be constructed involving gradual differences within which a range of ideas can begin to be located (as in Topic 10)? See following diagram.



It is important to note that candidates may find that the complexities of their synoptic studies require a combination of these models for different parts of the synoptic issues. However, it may be the case that one of these models may be more compelling in the light of their evidence and argument.

Overall candidate portfolios will evolve over time and they will need to re-visit and re-shape their material. Candidates should try to create a system which is easy to manipulate and amend - the portfolio is there as a useful means of revision.

3. Revision and examination techniques for synoptic assessment.

The following is written as part of a programme of revision technique. The scene is of a student who is coming up to the exam in the near future and who tries a 'dry run' of writing an answer under examination conditions. This is a way of focusing on the *use* of their material and it provides the candidate with opportunities of spotting areas that can be improved upon prior to the exam itself. The focus of this revision activity is to enable them to *answer* the question and the way in which they select and adapt their material. The period of writing the answer during the exam is the end of a process and it is important to aim to get that process as effective as possible. (Note: this material is focused on exam answers but some of the principles about planning the work could be applicable to coursework essays as well.)

Effective essay writing for this type of assessment will involve a fair amount of time in preparation. An important skill is related to time management and candidates should allow sufficient time to practice such essay writing. In the exam itself candidates have to write *one question in one and a half hours*.

Candidates could consider the relative merits of allocating different periods of time for different activities within the time allocated for the exam, for example:

5 minutes to select the question
15 minutes for planning
10 minutes to edit their essay at the end of the exam

This allows 1 hour for the writing up of the essay itself.

Or:

2 minutes to select the question
10 minutes for planning
5 minutes for the final edit

This allows about 1 hour and 15 minutes for the writing up of the essay.

Note that it is not necessarily the best practice for candidates to spend as much as possible of the full 90 minutes writing up the answer. Their planning in particular will focus on how they select and adapt the material to the demands of the synoptic question rather than writing down all they can remember about a topic without explicit reference to the question itself!

Candidates could divide the process of answering the exam question into stages which are realistic and manageable. Although there could be several stages, some may be bypassed or combined with each other. The aim is to be in control so that they plan sufficient time with identifiable tasks with the appropriate amount of flexibility to adapt and change when needed. The following may appear to be time-consuming. However, some stages could be done quickly especially with practice. This type of analysis is an attempt to clarify some of the essential ingredients in effective examination skills.

Candidates should:

3.1 Analyse the question, underline key words and think carefully about the meaning of these words. They should be clear about the distinction between content and process words. Essentially the process words should direct the ways they *use* the material. The aim is to be clear about the thrust of the question - what is it really getting at?

In the context of synoptic assessment they will need to be clear about the overall point of their essay which must concern itself, in particular, with connections between specified areas of their studies. They need to clarify what they are doing so that any reader can follow their line of thinking and interpretation as easily as possible and which adapts the material to the demands of synoptic assessment.

Select relevant synoptic material in a manner which in the past has worked for them e.g. brain storm and/or spider diagram. A spider diagram can be quite useful in spotting potential connections between different ideas and concepts. The aim at this point is to decide what to include and what to exclude in terms of relevance to *synoptic* assessment.

3.3 Create an outline so that from the above they are able to produce a coherent and progressive essay. Such a plan could be very brief indeed with the possible use of numbers for each major point and a clear understanding of the distinction between major points from those which are illustrative and secondary. Part of the aim of this is to avoid repetition. Note the value of very *concise* notes

that will help them see the overall pattern and shape at a glance. If appropriate, at this stage, they can manipulate the plan to best suit the synoptic demands of the question. The reason for the sequence of points should be as transparent as possible.

Ensure that the introductory paragraph(s) indicate the key signposts of where the significant points are. The determining influence will be the need to show connections between different areas of their studies, setting them in their broader context and relating them to specified aspects of human experience.

At this stage it may be important to define and/or clarify the key terms and expressions. The main body of their draft will contain the main points supported with relevant argument and evidence. The ending of their essay will clarify the overall coherence in their answer that meets the demands of synoptic assessment making sure their conclusion really does logically follow from their main body of the essay.

3.5 Given that this is a dry run candidates are now in a position to scrutinise their work. For example, they could ask the following types of questions:

- does their essay make explicit and systematic reference to the synoptic demands of the question?
- does their introduction provide evidence of an accurate understanding of the question and indicate how the answer is focused on synoptic issues?
- what is the function of each paragraph?
- is there a clear signpost which indicates the point of each paragraph?
- are there explicit transitions from one main point to another?
- do the sequence of points cohere in the most effective order for synoptic assessment?
- is the structure/plan followed the best one to answer the question or is it prudent to think of an alternative plan or plans?
- do they discriminate between the relative importance of different arguments and evidence in the essay because not all of these will be of equal importance?
- can this type of material and its length be readily handled in an exam?

A team of examiners will use the following mark scheme regarding different levels of achievement in their assessment of synoptic essays. It could be a good revision technique to apply this type of marking scheme to their own essays.

Assessment of the synoptic unit

This unit will be externally marked. Each script will be assessed out of a total of 50 marks, according to the following criteria that match the appropriate Assessment Objectives. The levels are hierarchical, so that, for example, level 5 presupposes the standard of work at level 4.

Assessment Objective 1

Select and demonstrate clearly relevant knowledge and understanding through the use of evidence, examples, and correct language and terminology appropriate for the course of study. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the connections between different units of the course.

30 marks

Level 1	Examination script presents no accurate or relevant knowledge	0
Level 2	Uncritical presentation of knowledge of the connections between different units. Demonstration of limited ability to identify and select the most relevant/important information and, therefore, reflecting little understanding. Any knowledge of the connections is presented in a simplistic form.	1 - 7
Level 3	Presentation of a selection of relevant material which reflects some understanding of the important connections between the different units. Some use of specialised religious language in appropriate contexts.	8 - 15
Level 4	Clear and obvious understanding of the connections between the different units, set in an appropriate context, for example the religious, cultural, historical, and/or social background. Topic explored using defined and relevant religious terms, reflecting a fuller understanding.	16 - 23
Level 5	Demonstration of a full knowledge and understanding of the connections between the different units. Topic explored with the proficient use of religious language.	24 - 30

Assessment Objective 2

Sustain a critical line of argument and justify a point of view. Demonstrate relationship of course of study to its broader context and to specified aspects of human experience.

20 marks

Level 1	No attempt to develop a line of argument and/or justify a point of view in the examination script. No significant or relevant reasoning. Incoherent answer.	0
Level 2	Limited awareness of the relationship of the course of study to its broader context and to specified aspects of human experience. Limited attempt to assess and evaluate a point of view. Imprecisely expressed.	1 - 5
Level 3	Some attempt to relate course of study to its broader context and to specified aspects of human experience. Some attempt to assess and evaluate a point of view and justify opinions at a simple level. Sufficient clarity of meaning.	6 - 10
Level 4	Presentation of evidence of knowledge and understanding of the relationship of the course of study to its broader context and to specified aspects of human experience. A satisfactory assessment is presented of a line of argument and a comparison of relative strengths/weaknesses of points of view. A structured argument, clearly expressed and accurately using some technical terms.	11 - 15
Level 5	Knowledge, understanding and explanation of a full range of views/responses to the relationship of the course of study and to specified aspects of human experience. Substantiated conclusions drawn with full justification of viewpoint. Expressed accurately, fluently, using a range of technical terms.	16 - 20

(This is an amended paper written by Arthur Giles, Chief Examiner for Edexcel Advanced GCE in Religious Studies, originally published in *'Dialogue' April 2000.*)

Appendix 1: Coursework titles

Approved coursework titles

Candidates using any title chosen from this list do not need to submit Coursework Approval Forms (CAFs) before embarking on their coursework. The list will be updated at regular intervals.

Candidates must, however, seek approval for any title not listed. Approval is gained by submitting CAFs, indicating the modules to be studied, to the appropriate Chief Examiner(s) by 15 December in the year preceding the examination. Centres should note that use of the same material, or submission of the same topic in different modules, will not be approved.

Unit 2: Topics in the study of Philosophy of religion

Section 1: Religious belief; faith and reason; revelation

A study of propositional and non-propositional interpretations of religious belief.

A study of the justification of religious belief with reference to the writings of a philosopher.

"A religion based on reason is more trustworthy than one founded on blind faith." Discuss.

A philosophical analysis of interpretations of faith.

A philosophical study of revelation.

A study of propositional and non-propositional interpretations of revelation.

"Humanity can only know God by means of revelation." Discuss.

A study of the relationship between revelation and faith.

Section 2: Religious experience; meditation

A study of William James and Rudolph Otto on religious experience.

A study of the cultural influences on meditation.

An analysis of the meaning of *religious* in the context of religious experience.

"Religious experience is all in the mind of the believer." Discuss.

A philosophical analysis of prayer and meditation in the context of religious experience.

How convincing are religious experiences in a secular age as a means of justifying religious belief?

"Naturalistic interpretations fully explain religious experiences." Discuss.

How far are religious experiences open to non-religious interpretations?

A philosophical analysis of religious experience.

What may a study of religious experience reveal about the nature of man (and/or God)?

Section 3: Relationship between mind and body from contrasting standpoints in Western and/or Eastern Philosophy of religion

A study of the strengths and weaknesses of dualism.

A study of two different interpretations of the notions of soul.

"We are basically physical beings." Discuss.

A study of the contrasting views of dualism and monism.

An examination of the view that it is possible to have disembodied consciousness.

"I am a bundle of changing perceptions and no more." Discuss.

A study of Hindu (or another religion) beliefs about the relationship between mind and body.

Section 4: A study of one or more philosophers of religion

A study of the philosophy of religion and influence of Shankara.

An analysis of the ways in which the philosophy of religion has been helped or hindered by the ideas of Nagarjuna.

What are Plato's main ideas about religion? To what extent are they influential in Western religious philosophy?

Examination of how Aquinas has bridged the gap between Greek philosophy and more modern Christian belief.

Analysis of the role of God in Descartes' quest for certainty.

A critical discussion of Hume's "Natural History of Religion".

A study of the existential views of Kierkegaard and Sartre.

An analysis of the religious existentialism of Kierkegaard.

An analysis of the religious philosophy of Bonhoeffer.

An analysis of Ayer's purpose of philosophy and the consequences for religion.

Section 5: A study of a topic related to one of the following disciplines in the study of religion: anthropology of religion; psychology of religion; sociology of religion.

A study of sacred time and sacred place in pre-literate religious traditions.

A study of Freud and Jung on the value of religious belief.

An investigation of the impact of secularisation on religious practice (and/or belief).

A study of how and why people differentiate sacred space based on the writings of Mircea Eliade.

A study of the psychology of belief with reference to the influence of Freud. How far is his analysis of religion relevant to society today?

A discussion of the concept of religion in the psychology of Erich Fromm.

An understanding of religion from the perspectives of the analytical school of psychology.

What role does society play in the formation of religious cults?

An analysis of the ways in which the development of the sociology of religion has been helped or hindered by the ideas of Karl Marx.

An analysis of the Marxist perspective on religion.

Can religion change society? An analysis of functionalist and Marxist theories.

Two contrasting views on the function of religion in society.

To what extent do you agree with the explanations of sociologists for the growth of new religious movements?

From a sociological viewpoint, how secular has our society become?

"Religion fulfils a number of important functions in modern society." Discuss.

An examination of Christian cults and an analysis of their nature and attraction.

"The Hare Krishna movement is accurately described as a cult." Discuss.

Unit 3a: Topics in the study of the Old Testament/Jewish Bible

Section 1: Ethics and Religion

The relationship between biblical teaching and ethical behaviour.

To what extent does the Old Testament/Jewish Bible provide appropriate ethical teaching for believers today?

To what extent are Old Testament teachings concerning the family appropriate to society today?

Section 2: Science and religion, with reference to modern debates about the Bible

To what extent are biblical ideas about creation compatible with modern theories about evolution? How have scholars attempted to deal with the issue?

A study of the Book of Daniel. How important is the idea of the apocalypse to Christians today?

In what ways may modern ideas about evolution conflict with the biblical concept of creation?

An examination of the religious, scientific and other factors which have affected, in modern times, the interpretations by biblical theologians of the accounts of creation in Genesis 1 and 2.

In what way(s) has the development of the natural sciences (or one aspect of natural science) challenged teachings concerning creation and/or the nature of mankind presented in the Old Testament/Jewish Bible?

In what ways, and for what reasons, did Charles Darwin find that his scientific work threatened his religious beliefs? How may Darwin's resolution of this problem be relevant for Christians in the present day?

"What is man?" (Psalms 8:4). Analyse the answer of the Jewish Bible/Old Testament to this question.

Section 3: The nature and activity of God as presented in one book or part of one book in the Old Testament/Jewish Bible

How does a study of the Book of Job/Psalms contribute to our awareness of the Jewish understanding of God?

How does the concept of suffering in "Job" grant us an insight into the nature and activity of God?

Consider the purpose of the literary presentation of the nature of God's activity in Genesis.

A study of the nature and activity of God presented in the book of Judges with particular reference to the theme of a just war.

Section 4: Monotheism and the nature of God

In what ways may Old Testament teachings concerning personal and/or social relationships cause problems for Christians today?

An examination of the titles for God in the Jewish Bible/Old Testament and their relevance today.

Consider the significance of the monotheistic view of God in the Jewish Bible/Old Testament for the development of religious belief and practice.

Section 5, 6, 7: The relevance of Old Testament/Jewish Bible teaching for religious belief today

An examination of the religious and literary features of Genesis chapters 1-11 and their significance today.

An examination of the religious and literary features of the "Patriarchal Narratives" in Genesis chapters 12-50 and their significance today.

An examination of the religious and literary features of Ecclesiastes and their relevance to present day society.

How has modern feminist exegesis used the Adam and Eve story?

To what extent are the views of contemporary scholars about the nature, purposes and original uses of the Psalms relevant to the use of those Psalms in modern Church worship?

A study of the changing approaches to women in the Old Testament and the significance of this to present day society.

Is the teaching in the "wisdom" literature of the Old Testament of any relevance today?

Is the message of Amos/Hosea/Jeremiah of importance today?

Section 8: A topic related to the Old Testament/Jewish Bible

In what ways has archaeology contributed to an understanding of biblical teachings about creation/the flood in Genesis 1 and 2?

How may a study of archaeology contribute to an understanding of the fall of Jericho?

How far is the Old Testament a reliable source of historical evidence?

To what extent do archaeological discoveries confirm biblical traditions concerning the Temple?

Unit 3b: Topics in the study of Religious Ethics

(N.B. Candidates are required to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the ethical topic identified from a religious perspective.)

Section 1: Medical ethics, related to one or more of: eugenics, abortion, embryo research, euthanasia, suicide.

"An acceptance of the practice of abortion (or of embryo research) is incompatible with Christian belief in the sanctity of life but not with the attitudes of ethical philosophers or popular politicians." Discuss.

An examination of religious influences on beliefs about abortion.

What influence does embryo research have on beliefs about a "soul" of a person?

A study of beliefs about euthanasia between two religions.

Philosophical analysis of the moral and religious issues raised by the practice of abortion.

A study of Christian beliefs (or those of another religion) about abortion in comparison with political views today (or another religion).

An analysis of the ways in which acceptance of abortion has affected women today with particular reference to Christian beliefs (or those of another religion).

"An acceptance of the practice of abortion is incompatible with Muslim beliefs (or those of another religion) in the sanctity of life but not with the attitudes of some medical practitioners and some ethical philosophers." Discuss.

Is the sanctity of life to be regarded as a moral absolute? Discuss in relation to abortion.

An investigation of religious views on eugenics and embryo research.

How might the scientific understanding of human genetic structure influence Christian thought and practice (or that of another religion)?

An analysis of religious views on the start and end of life.

An analysis of the moral and religious issues raised by euthanasia.

A study of a Christian (or another religion) and Buddhist belief (or another religion) about abortion (and/or euthanasia).

How may the Christian faith (or another religion) inform the debate over euthanasia?

"An acceptance of the practice of voluntary euthanasia is incompatible with Christian belief (or the belief of another religion) in the sanctity of life but not with the attitudes of some ethical philosophers or some medical practitioners." Discuss.

Why does the Hospice movement aim to help people die with dignity? Discuss their beliefs about human nature.

What are the moral and religious differences, if any, between euthanasia and suicide?

Section 2: Animal rights

An examination of Christian views (or those of another religion) about animal experimentation for medical research.

Analysis of the contributions of Christian teachings (or those of another religion) to the ethical debate about animal rights.

A discussion of animal rights with reference to Christian beliefs about human nature and creation.

Religious and ethical responses to animal experimentation.

Section 3: Conservation of the environment

"Man, made in the image of God, is a trustee of this planet." What influence does this belief have on conservation issues?

A philosophical discussion of care of the environment and ecology from Muslim (or another religion) points of view.

"Christians should be 'greener' than non-Christians." Discuss.

Discussion of conservation of the environment as an ethical issue from Judaeo-Christian perspectives.

Section 4: Equality (racial or sexual)

"Religions are notorious for promoting racial segregation". Discuss with reference to one specific historical period.

An examination of the writings of one major female theologian for her views on sexual equality.

A philosophical discussion of the relationship between racism and religious belief in Britain today.

Martin Luther King and Malcolm X: compared and contrasted.

An exploration and critical assessment of the life, ministry and teaching of Martin Luther King.

How successful is Christian teaching on the equality and dignity of human beings in combating racism in churches and schools?

An examination of the moral dilemmas posed for Christians (or other believers) by AIDS.

A study of the attitudes of the Roman Catholic, Methodist and Anglican Churches to homosexuality.

A philosophical analysis of the question whether or not women should be ordained into the priesthood of the Church.

Section 5: Business ethics

A study of moral and religious issues associated with 'corporate citizenship'.

"In certain circumstances economic factors should override other concerns." Discuss this claim with reference to moral and religious views.

What contributions can moral and religious views make to the balance between profits and wider responsibilities?

What place, if any, is there for social conscience in businesses? Discuss the contributions of moral and religious views on this question.

An examination of moral and religious contributions to the idea of 'the free market economy'.

Unit 4: Topics in the study of the New Testament

Section 1: The approaches of scholars to an understanding of the composition, authorship, date, purpose(s) and characteristics of one New Testament Book

How important is the notion of the apocalypse to Christians today? A study with particular reference to the Book of Revelation.

An investigation into the authorship of (any book) and its importance today.

To what extent may religious truth have been more important than historical accuracy to the author of Mark?

A study of the purpose and main characteristics of Matthew/Mark's Gospel and their significance today.

Can the authorship of the Fourth Gospel be properly established?

Section 2: A study of the person and work of Jesus in one New Testament Book

How far is Christ portrayed in Matthew's Gospel as fulfilling the messianic promise?

An analysis of the scholastic debate on Paul's teaching on "Justification through faith" in Galatians and its significance today.

An analysis of Jesus' teaching through parables in Matthew and their importance today.

What did Jesus mean by calling himself the "Son of Man" and what is the significance of this today?

A study of the Christology of Ephesians and its relevance today.

How far does Mark's presentation of the teaching of Jesus meet the needs of present day society?

Did the writers of the New Testament think that Jesus was God? How important is it for Christians today to believe in Jesus' divinity?

"Son of Man" and "Son of God". How far do these two titles describe different aspects of Jesus' identity? Should the modern Christian regard these titles as having equal importance, or should one be exalted above the other?

Consider the significance of the titles for Jesus used in the gospel of Matthew/Mark/Luke/Fourth Gospel. To what extent may these titles identify Jesus for Christians today?

Outline the Christology of Mark's Gospel. In what ways have scholars attempted to interpret it and what can today's Christians learn from Mark's presentation of Jesus?

Section 3: A study of the nature, purpose, presentation of miracles in New Testament Literature

A study of the relationship between faith and miracles in the New Testament and its importance today.

To what extent does the New Testament understanding of "miracle" meet philosophical and popular objections to the concept? How does this understanding inform the modern Christian's belief in miracle?

How far may theology be reconciled with science in explaining the nature of, and reasons for, the miracles of Jesus?

What difficulties may be encountered in an attempt to reconcile theology with science in explaining the nature of, and/or the reasons for, the presentation of miracles in the New Testament?

In what circumstances might Christians today regard an event as miraculous?

Section 4: A study of the historical reliability of the Bible, with special reference to the New Testament

Does Paul's letter to the Corinthians have anything to say to Christians today?

Are New Testament miracles and modern science reconcilable?

How far is the New Testament a reliable source of historical evidence?

How reliable is the New Testament evidence concerning the Resurrection?

To what extent may religious truth have been more important than historical accuracy to the author(s) of the Gospel/one particular gospel or New Testament text.

In the light of the twentieth century's knowledge of first century Palestine, consider the accuracy of the portrayal of Jesus in the Gospel/one particular gospel or New Testament text.

Section 5, 6, 7: A study of New Testament teachings on personal and social relationships

An examination of the New Testament foundations of modern teaching concerning social justice.

The relevance today of New Testament teaching on marriage and divorce.

How appropriate are New Testament teachings on the family today?

Does the portrayal of women in the New Testament justify claims that New Testament writers were "gender conscious"? Is this of relevance today?

A study of New Testament teachings on adultery and homosexuality. How might these cause problems for Christians today?

A study of New Testament teachings on caring for the poor and its importance for Christians today.

In what way(s) may New Testament teaching concerning personal and/or social relationships cause problems for Christians in society today?

Consider the status of women in the New Testament, and its significance today.

Unit 5: Topics in the study of Christianity and the Christian Church

Section 1: The English Reformation

An assessment of the contribution of (a named person from the specification) to the development of the English Reformation

'John Wycliffe: The Morning Star for the Reformation'. Examine the claim made in this statement.

To what extent was the English Reformation a matter of state rather than religion?

An examination of the development of the Reformation in Scotland.

To what extent did Christian Humanism contribute to the development of the English Reformation?

Section 2: The European Reformation

An examination of the causes of the Reformation in Europe.

To what extent did Christian Humanism influence the development of the Reformation in Europe?

In what ways may Savonarola and Huss be considered forerunners of the Reformation in Europe?

A comparison of the development of the Reformation in Germany and in Switzerland.

An examination of the contribution made by either Philip Melancthon or Martin Bucer to the development of the European Reformation.

Section 3: Church History and Christian Thought

A study of the influence of Methodism on the influence and status of the Free Churches in the nineteenth century.

A study of the development and work of the Salvation Army.

An examination of the principles and beliefs to which a Christian may appeal when faced with the dilemma of a conflict between religious belief and the demands of the state.

An examination of the status and influence of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales in the nineteenth century.

A study of the work and influence of the Society of Friends in this period.

Consider the development of religious education in England in this period.

Why has the ordination of women been such a controversial issue in this period?

Is the Ecumenical movement realistic or idealistic?

How has the Catholic Church promoted ecumenism in the twentieth century?

To what extent and for what reasons might the 1988 Education reform Act help or hinder the development of a multi-cultural society in England and Wales?

"The development of religious pluralism in England justifies the claim of Religious Education to a place in the curriculum." Discuss.

In what ways and for what reasons did the Second Vatican Council attempt to reform the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church concerning the laity and how effective were these reforms?

What place has Christianity in today's society?

To what extent may diversity of belief reflect a flourishing rather than a troubled Church?

To what extent should the Black Church movement in the UK be integrated into mainstream Christianity?

How has the nature and role of the priesthood changed in the 20th century?

Section 4: Christian Thought and Liberation Theory

Examine the development of Liberation Theology in either Latin America or Asia.

Consider the development and significance of Feminist Theology.

A study of the role of the Churches in Europe during the Holocaust.

'Christian theology has an inadequate understanding of the Earth and has, therefore, contributed to its destruction'. Consider the development of Ecotheology.

To what extent is liberation theology blazing a trail for the Catholic Church?

Examine the diversity of Christian responses to issues of social and economic concern in Asia in the twentieth century.

Discuss the response of the Church(es) to the growth of liberation theology in Asia in the twentieth century.

Section 5: Christian Belief and Practice

To what extent have scientific discoveries required modern theologians to restate their beliefs?

A study of the teaching of Dietrich Bonhoeffer in the light of increasing secularism.

To what extent is Christian teaching about marriage and the family relevant in modern society?

An examination of the different approaches of the Christian Church towards baptism and/or the Eucharist.

An investigation into the difference between secular and Christian attitudes towards death.

Section 6: Church History

Why did the teachings of Arius cause such controversy in the Early Church?

Why did the Romans persecute the early Christians? Examine the ways in which the Church responded to this persecution.

A study of the development of the canon on the New Testament.

An Examination of the differing views about the conversion of Constantine. To what extent was the reign of Constantine a watershed in the history of the Church?

Why was the Council of Chalcedon called? Examine the significance of the decisions taken at the Council.

A study of the Gregorian reforms of the Church in the eleventh century.

What were the reasons for the crusades? How successful were the Crusades? What effect did the Crusades have on the development of the Church and Christian thought?

An examination of the practice of pilgrimage and its significance in the medieval Church.

Is Christianity a cult?

Can Jehovah's Witnesses be classed as Christians?

Describe the main teachings of Marcian. To what extent is it correct to call him a gnostic? Account for the failure of Marcian's ideas to capture the allegiance of the Church at large.

An examination of the religious and social reasons for the origin of specified Christian denominations and a consideration of the continuation of such reasons in the present day.

An examination of the reasons for, nature, consequences and significance of heresy, or one specified heresy (NOT studied in Module 5), in one particular period of Christianity.

To what extent may diversity of belief reflect a flourishing rather than a troubled Church?

What is the role of the laity in the Christian Church?

Does a study of the attitudes and actions of Christians, faced with persecution and/or martyrdom in the past, have value to present day Christians?

In what ways and with what success have Christian theologians responded to the growth of secularisation in society in the twentieth century?

In the light of the Ten Commandments, how do Christians justify going to war?

Unit 6: Topics in the study of World Religions

Section 1: Religious pluralism in theory and practice

A study of religious pluralism in India at the time of Gautama the Buddha.

An examination of the dilemmas posed by the range of religious observances in the UK at the present time.

"The Jain teaching on ahimsa (non-violence) is the over-ruling, eternal law which should determine people's view about diverse religious traditions." Discuss.

A study of Islamic (or other specified religions) attitudes to scripture, including ideas about the nature and authority of revealed texts and their relevance in the life of twentieth century believers.

To what extent is the city of Jerusalem vital to the followers of three main world religions in the present time?

A study of current explanations about the place of Christianity (or another religion) in a pluralist society.

"An acceptance of the exclusivist claims about Christianity as made by some scholars may be incompatible with the concept of a pluralist society." Discuss.

Section 2: Religious practice in a multi-cultural society, including the UK.

A study of Hindu (or other religion) sexual attitudes and an analysis of its compatibility with modern social practice.

The case for and against a "Muslim parliament" in the UK.

A study of the differences between the moral codes of Christians AND Muslims (or other religions) in the UK.

To what extent are practices of Theravada Buddhism (or another religion) compatible with a western society at the present time?

An analysis of the issues posed by the practice of Buddhism (or another religion) in a Christian country.

The Hindu emphasis on female aspects of the deity is a reflection of Hindu approaches to gender." Discuss.

Given Hinduism's teaching about the soul, what is a Hindu attitude towards abortion?

To what extent can Islamic (or another religion's) arranged marriage survive in a multicultural society?

A study of the role of women in Christianity AND Islam (or other religions).

To what extent does a multi-cultural society influence Muslim moral and sexual codes (or those of another religion).

An examination of the issues posed by a commitment to Islam (or another religion) in a multi-cultural society.

To what extent does Islamic teaching (or another religion) present a challenge to capitalism?

A study of Christian AND Muslim (or other religions) attitudes to sex and marriage.

A study of the Jewish ten commandments and the Buddhist five precepts and their compatibility with modern society.

An investigation and analysis of the role of women in contemporary Judaism (or another religion) in the context of a multi-cultural society.

A study of attitudes towards homosexuality in two world religions.

An analysis of the teachings of Guru Nanak and their relevance in a contemporary multicultural society.

"Some westerners think Muslim women do not receive equal treatment with men. In fact, the aim of Islam is quite the opposite." Discuss in the context of a multicultural society.

"There is no sexual equality in Judaism. Women are more important than men." Discuss in the context of a multicultural society.

An analysis of different views about marriage and divorce within Christianity.

A study of Muslim social and moral codes (or those of another religion) in the context of contemporary British culture.

Section 3: Inter-faith dialogue

Is the logical outcome of inter-faith dialogue the ultimate inclusion of the best aspects of all faiths in one religion? To what extent do modern Christians (or those of another religion) subscribe to this view?

A study of exclusivism and inclusivism in two religious traditions.

An examination of Vatican 11's Declaration on non-Christian religions.

In what ways can one begin to judge the truth-claims made by different religious traditions?

A study of the involvement of Jews and Christians in the Holocaust and the implications for inter-faith dialogue.

Section 4: A study of the contrasting beliefs about God and/or existence in two different religions or within in one religion.

"Mahayana Buddhism is a revolution of the Theravadin beliefs about suffering." Discuss.

A study of Jewish and Christian beliefs (or another two religions) about monotheism.

A study of Christian and Hindu beliefs (or another two religions) about life after death.

A study of Hindu and Christian (or another two religions) views of God.

A study of the Buddhist and Christian (or another two religions) views of human existence.

A study of the Biblical understanding of sin and the Buddhist teaching of unskilful action.

Examination of the phenomena of "near death experiences" in two religious traditions.

An analysis of the effects of beliefs about life after death on lifestyle in two world religions.

Discuss the concepts of sin and repentance in Christianity and Islam.

Analysis of the different theories concerning "the self" in Buddhism and Christianity.

Examination of different beliefs of God and revelation with regard to two religions.

Analysis of the concepts of Buddhist enlightenment and Krishna consciousness.

A study of Christian and Hindu beliefs about God as "the One and the Many".

A discussion of Buddhist beliefs about the Buddha and Christian beliefs about Christ.

An examination of anatta and atman.

A study of the pathways to salvation in two religious traditions.

Section 5: An examination of the religious, social and cultural aspects of practices, festivals and rites of passage in one or more religion(s) and their significance for the development of the individual and the community.

An examination of the cultural influences on the early development of Sikh practices.

A study of the cultural influences on Buddhist practices in Japan.

An investigation and analysis of "three rites of passage" in Jewish life and the rituals associated with them.

A study of Buddhist meditation and Christian prayer.

An examination of the religious, social and cultural aspects of Buddhist practices (or another religion) in the western world.

A study of Judaism (or another religion) examining the religious (and/or social/cultural) aspects of practices (and/or festivals/rites of passage) and their significance for the development of the individual and the community.

How far is it accurate to describe Hinduism as a way of life?

Examination of the dilemmas faced by British Jewry at the present.

An investigation into the purposes of worship for the believer in Christianity and Judaism (or another two religions)

An examination of the differences between a Muslim living in Saudi Arabia (or another Muslim country) and a Muslim living in the UK.

How difficult is it to be a practising Buddhist in contemporary Britain?

Appendix 2: A students' guide to coursework

1. Introduction

Your coursework, marked out of 50, will count for approximately 33% of your final mark for the AS. It will test both assessment objectives (AO1 and AO2).

Candidates will be assessed on their ability to achieve the following objectives:

AO1 Select and demonstrate clearly relevant knowledge and understanding through the use of evidence, examples and correct language and terminology appropriate to the course of study. In addition, Advanced GCE candidates should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the connections between different elements of their course of study.

AO2 Sustain a critical line of argument and justify a point of view. In addition Advanced GCE candidates should relate elements of their course of study to their broader context and to specified aspects of human experience.

They will also develop the following skills:

1. recall, select and deploy specified knowledge
2. identify, investigate and analyse questions and issues arising from the course of study
3. use appropriate language and terminology in context
4. interpret and evaluate religious concepts, issues, ideas, the relevance of arguments and the views of scholars
5. communicate, using reasoned arguments substantiated by evidence

Coursework will be assessed by one piece of coursework with a recommended length of 2000 - 2500 words. This must be originally written by you, the candidate, and certified as your own work by your teacher. As you produce your coursework supervision from your teacher will be provided.

2. Planning your work

You may find it helpful to answer the following questions whilst planning your coursework:

1. What am I interested in?
2. Why have I chosen this title?
3. Does the title cohere with the relevant assessment objectives?
4. Will the title satisfy the assessment criteria?
5. Does the title explicitly conform to the specification requirements?
6. What do I already know about the topic?
7. What do I need to find out?
8. Where will I find the appropriate information?
9. Am I sure of access to relevant sources to complete the work? If not, should I propose a different title?
10. Is this work manageable in the time available and consistent with the AS assessment weighting of approximately 33%?

11. How do I propose to structure my work so as to be a coherent study leading to well-reasoned conclusions?

3. Sources

Sources may include the following:

- artefacts
- articles
- autobiographies/biographies
- books
- films
- internet
- magazines
- newspapers
- oral sources
- religious centres/places of worship
- TV programmes
- unpublished material

4. Teacher's Role

Advice and some assistance can be given at all stages of the work, but you must identify and acknowledge this help. Your supervising teacher will give advice on:

- the formulation of the title
- the completion of the Coursework Approval Form
- the selection and evaluation of sources
- the presentation of the work
- the acknowledgement of sources

5. Assessment

Edexcel will mark your coursework, in accordance with the following assessment criteria:

Assessment Objective 1

Select and demonstrate clearly relevant knowledge and understanding through the use of evidence, examples and correct language and terminology appropriate to the course of study.

35 marks

Level 1	Coursework represents no accurate or relevant knowledge	0
Level 2	Uncritical presentation of knowledge, demonstration of the limited ability to identify and select the most relevant/important information and therefore reflecting little/no understanding. Any knowledge presented is in a simplistic form	1-9
Level 3	Presentation of a selection of relevant material which reflects some understanding of the important features of a topic. Some use of specialised religious language in appropriate contexts.	10-18
Level 4	Clear and obvious understanding of the topic set in an appropriate context, for example the religious, cultural, historical and/or social background. Topic explored using defined and relevant religious terms reflecting a fuller understanding.	19-26
Level 5	Excellent use of factual material, from a variety of sources, verifiable through references, demonstrating a full understanding of the topic. Topic explored with the proficient use of religious language.	27-35

Assessment Objective 2

Sustain a critical line of argument and justify a point of view.

15 marks

Level 1	No attempt to develop a line of argument and/or justify a viewpoint.	0
Level 2	Limited awareness of issues involved and of need to assess and evaluate different views presented.	1-3
Level 3	Some attempt to present a viewpoint with some explanation of choice.	4-7
Level 4	Presentation of evidence of knowledge of more than one point of view/response to the topic. A satisfactory assessment is presented with line of argument verified by references as appropriate and comparison of relative strengths and weaknesses of viewpoints.	8-10
Level 5	Substantiated conclusions drawn from a line of argument with full justification of viewpoint. Knowledge, understanding and explanation of a full range of views/responses to the topic.	11-15

Coursework will be sent to Edexcel for marking by 1 May in the year of the examination.

Appendix 3: A students' guide to essay writing

The following should help you write even better essays than you have done up to now! This is not *the* definitive guide. Use it selectively and incorporate what is useful into your own work and planning patterns.

Planning

1. Make sure you understand what your title requires of you before you reach for notes, books and further information. If you have a clear grasp of the title, your reading and reflection will be precisely focused.
2. As you read and think about the material, the title will become clearer as will possible ways of answering it.

Reading and note taking

1. *Always* note the author, title, publisher and date of *all* your reading materials. Also note page numbers of important quotations you may use. This can save you hours and sore feet - you need not then rush to the library for this information at a later stage!
2. As you read, note in your own words as far as possible:
 - a) the main ideas and information contained in the material
 - b) any critical comments and questions you may have.

You could use different coloured pens for (a) and (b) - which will help you when revisiting the material.

3. As you read more, refer relevant material to other works that you have read: e.g. "Ling develops this point more clearly in *The Buddha pp.50-1*, etc. When you come to read *all* your notes, this should help form a coherent and connected pattern.
4. At some stage - not too early and not too late - start jotting down a rough plan for your essay.
5. Warnings: The following may damage your health and your marks! When thinking through an essay structure remember these suggestions:

do:

- (a) try and discuss the material. Talking it through can help isolate weak points in an argument, alert you to aspects that you have not understood properly, and help you organise and clarify your ideas.
- (b) consult a reference dictionary at this stage which may help you to consolidate your grasp of the topic. You may also become aware of the lack of reading you have done if you fail to understand the entry. Do not feel shy - take one more book out of the library for the night, or read through books that you have already looked at.

however, do not:

- (a) rely on only one text. You are not required to be a photo-copying machine! You need to think out the material and organise it appropriately.
- (b) produce an essay which is only a descriptive outline. Make sure you allow your material to interact so that you are aware of contentious areas, faulty or weak arguments, the context of certain problems etc.

Essay writing: An essay plan

Most people find it extremely useful to have a detailed essay plan before writing. It may be in the form of key words or prose sentences, ordered in a "spider-diagram" fashion or in a linear structure.

Your plan may also contain the following elements:

1. an introduction
In this the topic under consideration is introduced with its context and background briefly presented. You may also wish to outline for your reader, how you are going to tackle the question. This creates a "mind-set" that helps the reader to get into the correct gear for your essay.
2. the main body of the essay
 - (a) The format of the essay will be dictated, to some extent, by the title.
 - (b) You may wish to list or number the various arguments or evidence that you are to inspect. At this planning stage, such a format can be useful.
 - (c) You may also note certain writers that are particularly relevant to each section - so that as you write, the material can be usefully employed: e.g. "for two opposed views on theodicy and the free will argument, see Hick 1978 pp 52-8." Hopefully, you will have spent a good deal of time reading and preparing. It is a shame to lose out on that work at this planning stage.
 - (d) You may wish to cite important quotations - and these could be marked in the plan: e.g. "cite Berger P. 12 (first three lines para 2) to support my argument."
 - (e) *Signposting* is essential. As you progress through your argument make sure the reader is aware of a new step, or new evidence being introduced: e.g. "Having discussed Luke's notion of 'salvation history', I now wish to consider some objections to interpreting Luke's theology in this way."
 - (f) The value of a good essay plan is that without having actually written the essay, you can have a good overview and at this stage rearrange, add, omit or read more material accordingly. You may be surprised that despite a tight plan, you will still find yourself making new creative links as you write. Planning should add insight and creativity, not kill it.
3. the conclusion
 - (a) You need to remind the reader about your discussion of the material and draw the whole thing together.
 - (b) You may wish to state in brief the conclusions of your study. They need not be dramatic or Nobel Prize winning. Your conclusions should be accurate, supported by the main body of the essay, and clear. The examiner may then feel that she/he has grasped the essay in its totality - as you have in writing it.

Writing and presenting your essay

It is recommended that you write a draft copy.

1. The essay should be neatly written or word-processed with a good left-hand margin (about 3 cm).
2. Number the pages and bind them together with a paper clip or binder.
3. Footnotes can appear at the foot of the page, or at the end of the essay (end notes). They should be used judiciously, to refer the reader to material that you have been using - either in direct quotation, in support of your argument, as evidence of assertions you make; e.g. do not simply state "Christians have always rejected violence". If you make such statements, you need to refer the reader to evidence in support of your point - especially when it is contentious or central to your argument. The bibliography should be at the end of the essay. If your footnotes omit the title (which will save you a lot of writing) and you use the author-date system: e.g. Ford 1999 p. 14; then the bibliography entry, arranged alphabetically, should read:

Ford D – *Theology: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 1999).

You may include works consulted but not actually referred to in the text. Do *not* cite any books which you have not actually consulted. Examiners do not give marks by numbers in your bibliography, but by the way you have used your resources.

Odds and ends

1. After hours of hard work, all that the examiner sees are the pages of your essay. Make sure you do yourself justice.
2. Always try and leave a few days free before you do your "final edit". Spellings, grammar, punctuation and inclarities can be easily noticed a day or so after writing.
3. Essay writing can be fun as well as facilitating your own interests, developments of skills and - getting you a good result.

Appendix 4: Coursework Approval Forms

ADVANCED SUBSIDIARY GCE IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

COURSEWORK APPROVAL FORM

CANDIDATE NAME
(CAPITALS):.....

CENTRE NAME
(CAPITALS):.....

.....

CENTRE NUMBER:..... CANDIDATE NUMBER:.....

EXAMINATION: JUNE:.....

MODULE No:..... TOPIC No:.....

COURSEWORK APPROVAL

Units to be attempted in the WRITTEN EXAMINATION (Please tick as appropriate). This section MUST be completed before submission of the form for approval.

UNIT 2		UNIT 3		UNIT 4		UNIT 5		UNIT 6	
		Section 3a		Section 4a		Section 5a Opt A		Section 6a	
		Section 3b		Section 4b		Section 5a Opt B		Section 6b	
				Section 4c		Section 5b Opt A		Section 6c	
						Section 5b Opt B		Section 6d	
						Section 5c			

PROPOSED TITLE OF COURSEWORK:.....

.....
.....
.....
.....

Detailed elaboration of aims of coursework:.....

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Signature of Coursework Supervisor:..... Date:.....

Signature of candidate:..... Date:.....

To be completed by the Principal Examiner:

The proposed Coursework is approved.	
The proposed Coursework is approved subject to the advice below being taken into account.	
The proposed Coursework is not approved for the reason(s) given below.	

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Signature of Principal Examiner:..... Date:.....

Appendix 5: Statement of authentication

EDEXCEL FOUNDATION
ADVANCED SUBSIDIARY RELIGIOUS STUDIES
COURSEWORK

STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICATION

The Authentication Statement should be signed by the candidate and teacher in charge and should be attached to the candidate's coursework submitted for assessment.

Declaration by Candidate

I declare that I have produced this piece of coursework without external assistance apart from any which is acceptable under the scheme of assessment and is recorded.

Signature _____

Date _____

Candidate Name _____

Candidate No. _____

Declaration by Teacher

I declare that the candidate's activities have been kept under regular supervision and that, to the best of my knowledge, no assistance has been given apart from any which is acceptable under the scheme of assessment and has been identified and recorded.

Signature _____

Date _____

Centre Name _____

Centre No. _____

**TO BE VISIBLE ON THE FRONT COVER OF THE
COURSEWORK.**

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