

## Religious Studies transition project

At A-Level we follow the **AQA Specification** and will study the following topics:

**Philosophy of Religion**

**Ethics**

**Study of Christianity**

**Dialogues (synoptic element)**



<https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/religious-studies/as-and-a-level/religious-studies-7062/specification-at-a-glance>

You can look at the full specification here too.

The A level course has a balance between the four areas, several of which you may have met before in your GCSE RS course, but will also contain content which is new to you. So to help prepare you for the step up and keep you engaged with the many aspects of Religious Studies over the summer, choose one or more of the activities outlined below.

The number of lightbulbs indicates the level of difficulty of each task. These mirror the progression which you will experience over the course.



Small step-up from GCSE – builds on knowledge & skills you already have



Larger step-up from GCSE – builds new knowledge & skills



Complex ideas & concepts

Developing the habit of studying independently is essential if you are to perform well at A Level. In Religious Studies you will regularly be set independent study which is relevant, challenging and extremely beneficial. To prepare you for Year 12 RS, you need to challenge yourself by completing the following tasks in preparation for commencing the course this September. We do not expect these to be done perfectly but we do expect to see evidence that you have thought deeply and tried your best.

We'd like you to bring your investigation(s) to enrolment in August, but if you'd like to get in touch about the work, get some feedback or find out more about the course, please email Joshua Block at [jbl@woking.ac.uk](mailto:jbl@woking.ac.uk)

Happy meditating!

**Minds**  
are like parachutes...  
they only work  
when they're **open**



### TASK 1



Read the information sheet 'Methods of proving?'

Write responses to the questions that are at the end of the sheet. You can type or use lined paper.

### TASK 2



Watch the following video clip from crash course philosophy (YouTube)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1A\\_CAKyt3GY&list=PL8dPuuaLjXtNgK6MZucdYldNkMybYIHKR&index=2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1A_CAKyt3GY&list=PL8dPuuaLjXtNgK6MZucdYldNkMybYIHKR&index=2)

Write a maximum of 10 bullet point notes to summarise your understanding. If you were to explain the content to another student, how would you do it? (Try it out - this will help you test your understanding)

### TASK 3



Using the information from the last task, prepare a resource to explain the theory from the video to other students. This can be in whatever format you wish (ppt/handout/report) but must focus on detail, clear information and a clear outline in your own words.

### TASK 4a

Below is a link to an online ethics text –book, 'Ethics for A Level' by Mark Dimmock and Andrew Fisher. Whilst it is not the main book used on the course, it will be a useful support especially if you need to access remotely!

Read the introduction chapter and answer the questions at the end of the chapter. You can type or use lined paper.

<https://www.openbookpublishers.com/reader/639#page/1/mode/2up>

### TASK 4b

Write a discursive piece on the subject of religion. Choose any aspect you wish.

You must show that you have taken into consideration a range of opinions, but you are free to include your own view on the subject.

**Remember** – be open minded and show that you can see things from the perspective of others.

How it links to the Specification:

Tasks 2 and 3 link to the Philosophy of Religion

Task 4a links to Religious ethics: normative theories

Task 4b links to Dialogues

Resources (include any hyperlinks):

- <https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/religious-studies/as-and-a-level/religious-studies-7062/specification-at-a-glance>
- 'Methods of proving' worksheets
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1A\\_CAKYt3GY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1A_CAKYt3GY) – Crash course philosophy: what is philosophy
- <https://www.openbookpublishers.com/reader/639#page/1/mode/2up>

Additional Information:

You will also study theology, as part of your A-level. For this, it is helpful to know the story of the person of Jesus. To help with this, we recommend reading one of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark (shortest!), Luke, John) or watching some of the wide variety of available resources – Miracle Maker/AD(Netflix)/Jesus of Nazareth along with documentaries/lectures online. It will also be useful to download the Bible App, which is free and allows you to access a range of biblical translations and learning resources.

Deadline:

Enrolment in August

## METHODS OF PROVING?

Over the centuries countless people have tried to prove that God exists because it matters to religious believers that their faith has credibility.

To prove something means to provide conclusive reasons for accepting it as true. Providing conclusive reasons for accepting the truth of God's existence has not been easy and philosophers have tried all the principle methods for proving

Essentially when someone is trying to prove something she/he is attempting to show that something is true. In other words she/he is trying to convince someone of something and a successful proof is one that removes any possibility of reasonable doubt. There are three main types of proof.

*God and Proof. John Lee.*

There are three types of proof used by philosophers to try to establish the truth of a statement:

- **direct proof** – a way of showing, in a direct and immediate way that something is true. It is based on empirical evidence.

One way in which someone may try to prove something is directly. Suppose, for example, that someone in England wanted to prove that pillar boxes are red. Generally, it is agreed that this is obvious: it is self evident that pillar boxes are red. People observe (directly) that pillar boxes are red. However, even though it is obvious this may still be considered to be a proof as it is not possible to rationally doubt what is being seen. This type of "proof" is obviously very basic, and

would not necessarily be one that is used all that often, but if a similar proof of God's existence can be found, then God's existence would be proven as it would be shown to be obvious.

*God and Proof p. 5*

Some religious believers claim that religious experiences in which an individual "sees" or "hears" God would count as direct proof of the existence of God, - **the argument from religious experience.** :

- **deductive reasoning** - a process of reasoning in which the conclusion follows logically and inevitably from the premises (the propositions / points on which the argument is based.) The argument has a series of premises linked by logical steps so the argument has the power to be completely convincing. The premises are "a priori" (coming before experience).

Most arguments are based on a series of assumptions; these are called "premises". These premises form the basis of an argument and the statement that someone is attempting to prove is called the "conclusion". For example, suppose somebody wanted to prove that a dog called Sophie has fleas. An argument for this could be based on two assumptions: firstly, that all dogs have fleas and secondly that Sophie is a dog (these are the premises). It could therefore be concluded that Sophie has fleas.

Thus the ideas of "premises" and "conclusions" are important. In logic a "successful" argument is one in which the conclusion is implied by the premises. This is often expressed as "if the premises are true, then the conclusion must also be true" or in other words the conclusion cannot be denied. Such successful arguments are known as "valid" arguments and the type of reasoning involved is called "deductive reasoning". (The conclusion is deduced from the premises.)

There is, however, another important aspect of logical arguments that needs to be kept in mind. Consider, for example, the following argument: All politicians are men, Mrs. Thatcher was a politician, therefore Mrs. Thatcher was a man. According to logic this is a valid argument:

the conclusion does follow on from the premises. However, it is clear that the conclusion is not true. This is because the premises on which the argument is based are not true; it is not true that all politicians are men. Thus even though the argument follows the laws of logic and is valid it is still possible to doubt the conclusion.

It is the implications of this that are important. In order to prove something by means of deductive reasoning not only is a logically valid argument required but it has to be an argument in which the premises are true.  
*God and Proof p. 6 ff.*

For centuries philosophers have struggled with the idea of finding a deductive argument for the existence of God that is both valid and has premises that can be shown to be true. If they were to succeed it would then be illogical for anyone to refuse to believe in the existence of God. **The Ontological argument** is a deductive argument that has been refined and refashioned many times.

Philosophers have also produced arguments for the existence of God based on inductive logic

- **inductive reasoning.** – a process of reasoning that reaches general conclusions from particular examples. This type of reasoning is often based on evidence of some kind, and so the premises of the argument are said to be “*a posteriori*” (following from experience.) Scientists commonly use inductive argument.

An inductive argument is one that attempts to make a general conclusion based on some evidence. This evidence is usually based on experience or experiment. An excellent example of the way an inductive proof might work can be found in science. A scientist might observe that when a piece of metal is heated it expands; she/he might then observe that another piece of metal also expands when it is heated. From this, and a series of other observations, the scientist might make the general conclusion that all metal expands when it is heated. In other words the conclusion has been based on experience and observation.

Science is clearly an excellent discipline that uses experiment to prove something. However, the idea of evidence is not limited to repeated experiment; proofs are found in other areas. Suppose, for example, that someone wishes to prove that Christopher Columbus discovered America in 1492. This is an historical claim and it would not be possible to construct an experiment to try to show that it was true; rather evidence would need to be gathered from sources such as documents in Christopher Columbus' time. In order to establish a proof that Christopher Columbus discovered America in 1492 it would be necessary to determine whether the evidence collected is convincing.

There are also other types of evidence that are often used as attempts to prove something. As an example suppose a company wanted to prove that its brand of washing-up liquid was the best. One way to try to do this would be through market research. A representative sample of people might be interviewed and if the company's washing-up liquid is judged the most effective and popular, then this might be seen as evidence that it is the best..... there is another important form of inductive argument and that is the argument from analogy. An analogy is a comparison of one thing to another to show how they are similar. This can be used as a proof of something if, for example, the two things that are being compared are very similar (or identical) in many ways and the first thing has a quality but it is not known whether the second thing has this quality: it could be concluded that it does since the two things are so similar in other ways.

Clearly one of the biggest problems with inductive arguments is that they do not, and indeed cannot, produce proofs that completely remove an element of doubt from the conclusion. In other words the conclusion does not necessarily follow from the premises. This is important to remember when considering "proofs" of God's existence: the idea of certainty can no longer apply.

*God and Proof. p. 10 ff.*

There have been a number of attempts to use evidence or observation as the starting point for arguments for the existence of God. These inductive arguments include the **Cosmological argument**, the **Design argument** and the closely related **Teleological argument** and also the **Moral argument**.

### **TASKS**

1. What is meant by the term proof?
2. List the three methods for providing proof.
3. Explain how direct proof works – what is the weakness of this type of proof?
4. What is deductive reasoning?
5. Explain how deductive reasoning leads to proof.

6. *What makes a deductive argument valid?*
7. *Is a valid argument always convincing? – what is necessary to make it convincing?*
8. *What is inductive reasoning?*
9. *Explain how inductive reasoning leads to proof.*
10. *Why can this type of argument never lead to absolute proof / certainty?*