

Victorian Certificate of Education

RELIGION AND SOCIETY

STUDY DESIGN



www.vcaa.vic.edu.au

Authorised and published by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
Level 1, 2 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

Accredited by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority
Level 4, 2 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

ISBN: 978-1-925264-39-5

© Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2016

No part of this publication may be reproduced except as specified under the *Copyright Act 1968* or by permission from the VCAA. For more information go to: www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Pages/aboutus/policies/policy-copyright.aspx.

The VCAA provides the only official, up-to-date versions of VCAA publications. Details of updates can be found on the VCAA website: www.vcaa.vic.edu.au.

This publication may contain copyright material belonging to a third party. Every effort has been made to contact all copyright owners. If you believe that material in this publication is an infringement of your copyright, please email the Copyright Officer: vcaa.copyright@edumail.vic.gov.au.

Copyright in materials appearing at any sites linked to this document rests with the copyright owner/s of those materials, subject to the *Copyright Act*. The VCAA recommends you refer to copyright statements at linked sites before using such materials.

The VCAA logo is a registered trademark of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority.

Contents

Important information	4
Introduction	5
Scope of study	5
Rationale	5
Aims	6
Structure	6
Entry	6
Duration	6
Changes to the Study Design	6
Monitoring for quality	6
Safety and wellbeing	7
Employability skills	7
Legislative compliance	7
Assessment and reporting	8
Satisfactory completion	8
Levels of achievement	8
Authentication	8
The aspects of religion	9
Unit 1: The role of religion in society	10
Area of Study 1	10
Area of Study 2	11
Area of Study 3	12
Assessment	13
Unit 2: Religion and ethics	14
Area of Study 1	14
Area of Study 2	15
Area of Study 3	16
Assessment	16
Unit 3: The search for meaning	18
Area of Study 1	18
Area of Study 2	19
Area of Study 3	20
School-based assessment	20
External assessment	21
Unit 4: Religion, challenge and change	22
Area of Study 1	22
Area of Study 2	23
School-based assessment	25
External assessment	26
End-of-year examination	26

Important information

Accreditation period

Units 1–4: 1 January 2017 – 31 December 2022

Implementation of this study commences in 2017.

Other sources of information

The [VCAA Bulletin](#) is the only official source of changes to regulations and accredited studies. The *Bulletin* also regularly includes advice on VCE studies. It is the responsibility of each VCE teacher to refer to each issue of the *Bulletin*. The *Bulletin* is available as an e-newsletter via free subscription on the VCAA's website at: www.vcaa.vic.edu.au

To assist teachers in developing courses, the VCAA publishes online the *Advice for teachers*, which includes teaching and learning activities for Units 1–4, and advice on assessment tasks and performance level descriptors for School-assessed Coursework in Units 3 and 4.

The current [VCE and VCAL Administrative Handbook](#) contains essential information on assessment processes and other procedures.

VCE providers

Throughout this study design the term 'school' is intended to include both schools and other VCE providers.

Copyright

VCE schools may reproduce parts of this study design for use by teachers. The full VCAA Copyright Policy is available at: www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Footer/Pages/Copyright.aspx.

Introduction

Scope of study

The beliefs, practices, principles and codes of religions provide ways in which individuals can answer questions about the meaning and purpose of life. In Religion and Society, religion is defined as a community organised around beliefs related to ultimate reality and the consequent beliefs, practices, principles and codes for behaviour. Adherence to particular beliefs, practices, principles and codes can form an important part of individual identity. They can determine membership of the religion and the transmission of meaning, both individual and collective, from generation to generation. Within each religious tradition, groups and individuals exhibit diversity of commitment and belief; some people do not identify with the generalised portrayal of their religious tradition, whereas others become strict adherents.

Religious traditions develop and evolve over time through the participation and contribution of members and through interactions with society. Throughout history, religion and society have interacted with each other in broad ways in response to a range of important issues. Some religious traditions continue to thrive while others have declined, disappeared or parts of them have been assimilated into other religions, which allow their ideas to live on in some form. New religious movements can develop into religious traditions.

In VCE Religion and Society, students undertake a general study of religion and its interaction with society in the past and the present. They study specific religious traditions or denominations in societies where multiple worldviews coexist and consider individual experiences of members as they engage with their religion. This study respects and encourages an open and objective inquiry, without partiality towards any one religion.

Rationale

VCE Religion and Society enables students to understand the complex interactions between religion and society over time. Religion has played and continues to play a significant role in the development and maintenance of society. Students come to appreciate that religion can be a positive force of power, authority and justice. However, religious institutions have not always interacted positively with society at large and have at times supported the unethical behaviour of other power structures in society and of individuals.

The study of religion and society can assist students in reaching a deeper, balanced understanding of societies and cultures in which multiple worldviews coexist. Students explore how such societies and their religious traditions negotiate significant ethical issues. Religious traditions offer value systems that guide their interactions with society and influence society's decision making. This study offers an insight into the religious beliefs and other aspects of religion that express these value systems. Students study the role of religions in supporting adherents to grapple with the big questions of human existence and to respond to significant life experiences.

Through the study of VCE Religion and Society students come to acknowledge the role of religion in shaping historical and present events. They explore times when religion dominated societies and the shifting role of religion in societies today in which multiple worldviews coexist and religion may be seen to have a lesser role.

This study fosters an appreciation of the complexity of societies where multiple worldviews coexist and develops skills in research and analysis, helping students to become informed citizens and preparing them for work and further study in fields such as anthropology, theology, philosophy, sociology, journalism, politics and international relations.

Aims

This study enables students to:

- understand the nature and purpose of religion
- explain the ongoing interaction between society and religion, and their influence upon each other, including in debate about important religious, cultural, political, social and ethical issues
- understand the interplay between society and individual identity formation through membership of religious traditions
- reflect on the interaction between society and the collective identity engendered by religious traditions
- reflect on the capacity of religion to provide ways of making meaning of significant life experiences for individuals
- develop an understanding of, and respect for, the religious beliefs of others, and acknowledge their freedom and right to hold those religious beliefs.

Structure

The study is made up of four units.

Unit 1: The role of religion in society

Unit 2: Religion and ethics

Unit 3: The search for meaning

Unit 4: Religion, challenge and change

Each unit deals with specific content contained in areas of study and is designed to enable students to achieve a set of outcomes for that unit. Each outcome is described in terms of key knowledge and key skills.

Entry

There are no prerequisites for entry to Units 1, 2 and 3. Students must undertake Unit 3 prior to undertaking Unit 4. Units 1 to 4 are designed to a standard equivalent to the final two years of secondary education. All VCE studies are benchmarked against comparable national and international curriculum.

Duration

Each unit involves at least 50 hours of scheduled classroom instruction over the duration of a semester.

Changes to the Study Design

During its period of accreditation minor changes to the study will be announced in the [VCAA Bulletin](#). The *Bulletin* is the only source of changes to regulations and accredited studies. It is the responsibility of each VCE teacher to monitor changes or advice about VCE studies published in the *Bulletin*.

Monitoring for quality

As part of ongoing monitoring and quality assurance, the VCAA will periodically undertake an audit of VCE Religion and Society to ensure the study is being taught and assessed as accredited. The details of the audit procedures and requirements are published annually in the [VCE and VCAL Administrative Handbook](#). Schools will be notified if they are required to submit material to be audited.

Safety and wellbeing

It is the responsibility of the school to ensure that duty of care is exercised in relation to the health and safety of all students undertaking the study.

Employability skills

This study offers a number of opportunities for students to develop employability skills. The *Advice for teachers* companion document provides specific examples of how students can develop employability skills during learning activities and assessment tasks.

Legislative compliance

When collecting and using information, the provisions of privacy and copyright legislation, such as the Victorian *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* and *Health Records Act 2001*, and the federal *Privacy Act 1988* and *Copyright Act 1968*, must be met.

Assessment and reporting

Satisfactory completion

The award of satisfactory completion for a unit is based on the teacher's decision that the student has demonstrated achievement of the set of outcomes specified for the unit. Demonstration of achievement of outcomes and satisfactory completion of a unit are determined by evidence gained through the assessment of a range of learning activities and tasks.

Teachers must develop courses that provide appropriate opportunities for students to demonstrate satisfactory achievement of outcomes.

The decision about satisfactory completion of a unit is distinct from the assessment of levels of achievement. Schools will report a student's result for each unit to the VCAA as S (Satisfactory) or N (Not Satisfactory)

Levels of achievement

Units 1 and 2

Procedures for the assessment of levels of achievement in Units 1 and 2 are a matter for school decision. Assessment of levels of achievement for these units will not be reported to the VCAA. Schools may choose to report levels of achievement using grades, descriptive statements or other indicators.

Units 3 and 4

The VCAA specifies the assessment procedures for students undertaking scored assessment in Units 3 and 4. Designated assessment tasks are provided in the details for each unit in VCE study designs.

The student's level of achievement in Units 3 and 4 will be determined by School-assessed Coursework (SACs) and/or School-assessed Tasks (SATs) as specified in the VCE study designs, and external assessment.

The VCAA will report the student's level of achievement on each assessment component as a grade from A+ to E or UG (ungraded). To receive a study score the student must achieve two or more graded assessments and receive S for both Units 3 and 4. The study score is reported on a scale of 0–50; it is a measure of how well the student performed in relation to all others who took the study. Teachers should refer to the current [VCE and VCAL Administrative Handbook](#) for details on graded assessment and calculation of the study score. Percentage contributions to the study score in VCE Religion and Society are as follows:

- Unit 3 School-assessed Coursework: 25 per cent
- Unit 4 School-assessed Coursework: 25 per cent
- End-of-year examination: 50 per cent.

Details of the assessment program are described in the sections on Units 3 and 4 in this Study Design.

Authentication

Work related to the outcomes of each unit will be accepted only if the teacher can attest that, to the best of their knowledge, all unacknowledged work is the student's own. Teachers need to refer to the current [VCE and VCAL Administrative Handbook](#) for authentication procedures.

The aspects of religion

For the purposes of this study, religion can be understood to have particular interrelated aspects. These provide a useful framework to assist students in their study of religion throughout Units 1 to 4. Students consider the following interrelated aspects when investigating a selected religious tradition or denomination and religion in general:

- Beliefs
- Sacred stories
- Spaces, places, times and artifacts
- Texts
- Rituals
- Symbols
- Social structures
- Ethics
- Spiritual experiences.

Unit 1: The role of religion in society

In this unit students explore the origins of religion and its role in the development of society, identifying the nature and purpose of religion over time. They investigate the contribution of religion generally to the development of human society. They also focus on the role of religious traditions over time in shaping personal and group identity. Students examine how individuals, groups and new ideas have affected and continue to affect religious traditions. The unit provides an opportunity for students to understand the often complex relationships that exist between individuals, groups, new ideas and religious traditions broadly and in the Australian society in which they live.

A range of examples are studied throughout the unit. For all areas of study, students explore detailed examples from more than one religion. These may be from one or more than one of the groups below. In addition, for Areas of Study 1 and 2 further shorter illustrative examples should be selected for study from across all the groups below.

- Spiritual and religious ideas in Prehistory (associated with, for example, Lascaux, Gobekli Tepe, Stonehenge, Jericho)
- Religious traditions of ancient civilisations (for example, Sumerian, Mesopotamian, Babylonian, Egyptian, Canaanite, Roman, Greek)
- Asian religious and philosophical traditions (for example, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shintoism)
- Abrahamic religions (for example, Judaism, Christianity and Islam).

Students consider the aspects of religion on [page 9](#) when investigating selected religious traditions and religion in general.

Area of Study 1

The nature and purpose of religion

In this area of study students are introduced to the nature and purpose of religion in general, exploring the role of religion in shaping and giving expression to spiritual experience. They identify the aspects common to religious traditions, explore the interrelation of these aspects generally and explain why these aspects are common to all religious traditions studied. They also explore how these aspects may vary between religious traditions.

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to discuss the nature and purpose of religion and explain the aspects of religion.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

Key knowledge

- the nature and purpose of religion, past and present, considering:
 - the questions and life experiences which shape religion and religious identity
 - other needs to which religion responds
 - the extent to which religion can satisfy these needs
- the role of religion generally in shaping and giving expression to spiritual experiences through the aspects of religion
- the relationship of the aspects to each other
- the varying importance of the aspects across different religious traditions.

Key skills

- analyse the extent to which religion can satisfy particular needs of individuals and communities
- describe the role of religion in shaping and giving expression to spiritual experiences through the aspects of religion
- describe the relationship of the aspects to each other
- explain the varying importance of the aspects across different religious traditions
- interpret, synthesise and apply primary and secondary source material.

Area of Study 2

Religion through the ages

In this area of study students investigate how society and religion influence each other, and the roles of religion in society. They consider the factors that influence these roles and the effect that developments in society might have on religion.

Spirituality and religion have been an integral part of the development of human societies as cultural knowledge and understanding is passed from generation to generation through a process of socialisation. As people spread across the globe they encountered and exchanged religious and cultural ideas. Over time, religious traditions have encountered challenging philosophical and spiritual movements, political regimes, legal structures, scientific ideas, colonisation, national myths, globalisation, secularisation, technological developments and historical events. These encounters have led to religious traditions taking various roles to initiate, endorse, modify or resist the spread of ideas and movements in society.

At times in history some religious traditions have lost the authority and power to explain crises for their society and have been abandoned; other religious traditions have adapted and been resilient or were re-established in a different form. Some religious traditions have been able to adopt and adapt beliefs, ideas and practices from other religious traditions while retaining their distinctiveness.

Outcome 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to discuss the changing roles and influence of religion in society.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 2.

Key knowledge

- how spiritual and religious ideas in Prehistory and religion have played a major role in some key events in history
- how developments in technology, philosophy and science from both within and outside religious traditions have affected the roles of religion in society
- other ideas and movements that have influenced and are influencing the roles of religion in society
- the reasons, when considering prehistoric and ancient religious traditions, why ideas or the religious tradition in its entirety ceased to exist
- the reasons why some ideas from one religious tradition become part of other religious traditions.

Key skills

- analyse the roles that religion plays in society
- explain, when considering prehistoric and ancient religious traditions, the reasons why ideas or the religious tradition in its entirety ceased to exist
- explain why some ideas from one religious tradition become part of other religious traditions
- interpret, synthesise and apply primary and secondary source material.

Area of Study 3

Religion in Australia

In this area of study students consider religion in Australia, past and present, and the influences on Australian religious composition, in particular from migration and secularisation. They explore how the communities and later institutions of these religious traditions perceived themselves and expressed their collective identity in Australia. This expression of collective identity may have been cohesive or diverse, with different religious communities and their distinctive identities contributing to the whole identity of the religious tradition. Students also examine the influence of religion on the personal identity of members. They explore the influence of religious traditions on the development of social infrastructure in Australia, and consider factors such as the laws governing the provision of education and welfare. This exploration should include the interfaith and ecumenical initiatives between and within religious traditions in Australia.

Outcome 3

On completion of this unit the student should be able to discuss the presence of religion in Australia, past and present.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 3.

Key knowledge

- the distribution of and adherence to major religious traditions in Australia, past and present
- the influences of recent religious and non-religious trends on Australian religious composition
- the influences of government policies on the religious composition of Australian society over time
- the way collective identity is expressed by religious traditions in Australia through relevant aspects of religion
- the personal meaning and identity that is found and further developed through engagement with relevant aspects of religion, in particular, spiritual experience
- tensions that can occur between members of a religious tradition over issues of authority, freedom, interpretation of beliefs and teachings, and behaviour
- interactions between different religious traditions and within the wider Australian society and reasons for these, in particular:
 - the role of religion in providing social infrastructure in Australian society
 - the role of interfaith and ecumenical interaction in Australia.

Key skills

- describe data on the distribution of and adherence to major religious traditions
- explain influences on religious composition
- outline how collective identity is expressed by religious traditions
- outline the personal meaning and identity that is found and further developed through engagement with relevant aspects of religion
- describe tensions that can occur between members of a religious tradition
- explain interactions between different religious traditions and within the wider Australian society and reasons for these
- interpret, synthesise and apply primary and secondary source material.

Assessment

The award of satisfactory completion for a unit is based on whether the student has demonstrated the set of outcomes specified for the unit. Teachers should use a variety of learning activities and assessment tasks that provide a range of opportunities for students to demonstrate the key knowledge and key skills in the outcomes.

The areas of study, including the key knowledge and key skills listed for the outcomes, should be used for course design and the development of learning activities and assessment tasks. Assessment must be a part of the regular teaching and learning program and should be completed mainly in class and within a limited timeframe.

All assessments at Units 1 and 2 are school-based. Procedures for assessment of levels of achievement in Units 1 and 2 are a matter for school decision.

For this unit students are required to demonstrate three outcomes. As a set these outcomes encompass the areas of study in the unit.

Suitable tasks for assessment may be selected from the following:

- reports
- debates
- identification exercises
- analytical exercises
- an essay
- written exercises
- annotated charts.

Where teachers allow students to choose between tasks they must ensure that the tasks they set are of comparable scope and demand.

Unit 2: Religion and ethics

How do we know what is good? How do we make decisions in situations where it is unclear what is good or not good? Do we accept what society defines as good? Do we do what feels right? Or do we rely on a definition of what is good from a religious tradition? What are the principles that guide decision making? Ethics is concerned with discovering the perspectives that guide practical moral judgment. Studying ethics involves identifying the arguments and analysing the reasoning, and any other influences, behind these perspectives and moral judgments. An important influence on ethical perspective is the method of ethical decision-making, made up of concepts, principles and theories.

Ethical questions that demand practical moral judgment are raised at the personal, family, local, wider community, national and global level. Family, community and traditional connections tie people together and provide an ethical background to guide what individuals choose to do, approving of some choices and disapproving of others. This ethical background is enmeshed with the dominant religious and philosophical traditions of the times within a culture at a certain point in time.

Today, religious and philosophical traditions interact with other sources of moral values represented in the media and popular culture. Nevertheless, society still often relies on cultural heritages that contain a variety of ethical perspectives as well as values centred on human dignity and basic justice. These remain fundamental to many legal and social systems, and to codes of behaviour. These perspectives and values constitute the everyday categories of ethical discourse in the world. They are taken by the individuals and groups that hold them to be the starting point and common ground for discussion about ethical issues and moral behaviour in societies where multiple worldviews coexist.

In this unit students study in detail various methods of ethical decision-making in at least two religious traditions and their related philosophical traditions. They explore ethical issues in societies where multiple worldviews coexist, in the light of these investigations.

Students consider the aspects of religion on [page 9](#) when exploring selected religious traditions and religion in general.

Area of Study 1

Ethical decision-making and moral judgment

In this area of study students are introduced to the nature of ethical decision-making in societies where multiple worldviews coexist. Ethical decision-making involves the selection of methods which have guiding concepts, principles and theories. Students explore concepts that underpin ethical decision-making and influences on practical moral judgment.

Methods of ethical decision-making such as ‘ought’ ethics, character ethics and outcome ethics are discussed, as well as theories leading to and derived from these methods. These methods and their supporting theories are based on various sources of ethical authority. Ethical methods and practical moral judgment are subject to varying emphases on factors such as duties, outcomes, laws (secular and religious), divinity, social order and social norms, tradition, reason, love, fear, absolutism, relativism, subjectivism, emotionalism, social justice, institutions, the common good, natural law, poetic justice, anarchy, ‘scientism’, and pragmatism.

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to explain the variety of influences on ethical decision-making and moral judgment in societies where multiple worldviews coexist.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

Key knowledge

- concepts used in ethical decision-making
- how the aspects of religion relate to ethical decision-making
- a variety of methods of ethical decision-making and the theories that support them
- a variety of principles derived from concepts and theories found in ethical methods
- the role of various influences involved in the process of forming practical moral judgments, including ethical methods of decision-making and other factors, such as reasoning, conscience, intuition, commonsense, assumptions, authorities, worldviews, values, codes of behaviour and the competing rights and responsibilities of individuals, groups and society.

Key skills

- define concepts used in ethical decision-making
- explain a variety of methods of ethical decision-making and the theories that support them
- identify a variety of principles derived from concepts and theories found in ethical methods
- explain the role of various influences involved in the process of forming practical moral judgments
- interpret, synthesise and apply primary and secondary source material.

Area of Study 2

Religion and ethics

In this area of study students examine religious ethical perspectives and other influences on moral judgments of at least two religious traditions in societies where multiple worldviews coexist. They also explore the philosophical traditions which have contributed to each religion's understanding of ethics. Certain authorities, values, norms, ideas, and ethical principles inform broad ethical perspectives and in turn moral judgments within religious and philosophical traditions. Other aspects of religion, in particular beliefs and texts, inform the decision-making process for religious traditions.

Outcome 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to explain how ethical perspectives and moral judgments are formed within at least two religious traditions, in societies in which multiple worldviews coexist.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 2.

Key knowledge

- the authorities, principles, values, norms and ideas informing ethical perspectives of at least two religious traditions in societies in which multiple worldviews coexist
- the ethical decision-making methods, including the philosophical traditions that have influenced the understanding of ethical perspectives of the religious traditions
- how the ethical perspectives of religious traditions inform the moral judgments of their religious communities
- the aspects of religion related to ethical decision-making processes in religious traditions.

Key skills

- identify the authorities, principles, values, norms and ideas informing ethical perspectives of religious traditions
- explain the ethical decision-making methods that have informed the ethical perspectives of religious traditions
- explain how the ethical perspectives of religious traditions inform the moral judgments of their religious communities
- interpret, synthesise and apply primary and secondary source material.

Area of Study 3

Ethical issues in society

In this area of study students build on the knowledge explored in Areas of Study 1 and 2. Focusing on two or more ethical issues, students apply this knowledge to an examination of debates about ethical issues conducted in the public arena of societies in which multiple religious and non-religious worldviews coexist. The analysis should explain why the issue is regarded as an ethical issue, identify contributors to the debate, including religious traditions, consider the influence of participants' contributions, and investigate the basis of ethical perspectives and moral judgments used in the debates, including the ethical methods involved in the decision-making process.

Outcome 3

On completion of this unit the student should be able to explain two or more debates on ethical issues in societies in which multiple worldviews coexist.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 3.

Key knowledge

- why the issues are regarded as ethical issues
- the religious and non-religious individuals, groups and traditions that contribute to the debates about ethical issues in societies where multiple worldviews coexist
- the ethical perspectives and moral judgments presented in the arguments by those participating in the debates, including the authorities, norms, values and ideas on which the various ethical perspectives and moral judgments rest
- the ethical decision-making methods involved in the debate process and their strengths and weaknesses
- the influence of the various participants' contributions to the debates.

Key skills

- justify in what sense the issues are ethical issues
- identify contributors to debates about ethical issues
- explain the ethical perspectives, moral judgments and ethical decision-making methods involved in the debates
- explain the influence of the various participants' contributions to the debates
- Interpret, synthesise and apply primary and secondary source material.

Assessment

The award of satisfactory completion for a unit is based on whether the student has demonstrated the set of outcomes specified for the unit. Teachers should use a variety of learning activities and assessment tasks that provide a range of opportunities for students to demonstrate the key knowledge and key skills in the outcomes.

The areas of study, including the key knowledge and key skills listed for the outcomes, should be used for course design and the development of learning activities and assessment tasks. Assessment must be a part of the regular teaching and learning program and should be completed mainly in class and within a limited timeframe.

All assessments at Units 1 and 2 are school-based. Procedures for assessment of levels of achievement in Units 1 and 2 are a matter for school decision.

For this unit students are required to demonstrate three outcomes. As a set these outcomes encompass the areas of study in the unit.

Suitable tasks for assessment may be selected from the following:

- reports
- debates
- role-plays
- identification exercises
- analytical exercises
- an essay
- written exercises
- annotated charts.

Where teachers allow students to choose between tasks they must ensure that the tasks they set are of comparable scope and demand.

Unit 3: The search for meaning

Over time and across cultures humanity has sought to understand the why and how of existence. In this quest for meaning humans have consistently posed big questions of life such as: Where did we come from? Is there someone or something greater than us – an ultimate reality? What is the purpose of our existence? How should we live? Is there anything beyond death? In response to this quest for meaning, various religious, philosophical, scientific, and ideological worldviews have been developed. Religion has developed answers in the form of various beliefs and other aspects that have offered ways of establishing meaning – not only for human existence, but also for all that exists. The aspects of religion have also attempted to explain the nature of relationships between humans individually and collectively, between humans and ultimate reality and between humans and the rest of the natural world.

The beliefs of any religion are the ideas held about ultimate reality and the meaning of human existence, such as the purpose of all life and notions of the afterlife. These beliefs together with their expressions through the other aspects form the distinctive identity of a religious tradition.

In this unit students study the purposes of religion generally and then consider the religious beliefs developed by one or more than one religious tradition or denomination in response to the big questions of life. Students study how particular beliefs within one or more than one religious tradition or denomination may be expressed through the other aspects of religion, and explore how this is intended to foster meaning for adherents. Students then consider the interaction between significant life experience and religion.

Religious tradition/s or denomination/s are to be selected from one or more than one of the following religious traditions: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism.

Students consider the aspects of religion on [page 9](#) when investigating religion in general and selected religious tradition/s or denomination/s.

Area of Study 1

Responding to the search for meaning

In this area of study students are introduced to the nature and purpose of religion in the human search for meaning. This is a general study of religion. Students are introduced to the purpose of religion in societies in which multiple worldviews coexist through the study in detail of a range of beliefs of one or more than one religious tradition or denomination. Beliefs are ideas that answer the big questions of life according to a religious worldview. In this area of study students relate the beliefs to certain categories and explore the connection of the beliefs to each other.

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to discuss and analyse the nature and purpose of religion and religious beliefs.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

Key knowledge

- the aspects of religion
- the purpose of religion in the search for meaning
- the nature of religious beliefs and their role in responding to the search for meaning
- for one or more than one religious tradition or denomination, a range of religious beliefs related to:
 - ultimate reality
 - the nature and purpose of human life
 - the meaning of suffering

- death and the afterlife
- the relationship between ultimate reality and humanity
- the relationship between humans
- the relationship between human life and the rest of the natural world
- the connections between these beliefs.

Key skills

- identify the aspects of religion
- explain the purposes of religion
- explain religious beliefs and their role in the search for meaning
- analyse connections between religious beliefs
- interpret, synthesise and apply primary and secondary source material.

Area of Study 2

Expressing meaning

In this area of study students build on the knowledge of religious beliefs from Area of Study 1. Beliefs are intended to achieve their full meaning when they are expressed through the other aspects of religion. Students study how the meaning of belief is expressed through other aspects of religion. They consider the role of the aspects of religion in general. Students then explore at least two beliefs studied in Area of Study 1, as they are expressed in the other aspects of the selected religious tradition/s or denominations. They examine how the selected beliefs and their expression in each of the other aspects are intended by the selected religious tradition/s or denomination/s to engender and nurture meaning.

Outcome 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to examine how beliefs and their expression in other aspects of religion are intended to respond to the search for meaning.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 2.

Key knowledge

- for religion in general, the role of each of the aspects, other than beliefs, in responding to the search for meaning
- for religion in general, the relationship of the aspects of religion to each other
- for the selected religious tradition/s or denomination/s:
 - how at least two religious beliefs are expressed through each of the other aspects of religion
 - the connections between these expressions, for each belief
 - how the selected beliefs and their expression in each of the other aspects are intended by the selected religious tradition/s or denomination/s to engender and nurture meaning.

Key skills

- explain the role of each of the aspects other than beliefs in responding to the search for meaning
- explain the relationship of the aspects of religion to each other
- analyse the expression of religious beliefs through each of the other aspects of religion
- examine how religious beliefs and their expression in each of the other aspects is intended to engender and nurture meaning
- interpret, synthesise and apply primary and secondary source material.

Area of Study 3

Significant life experience, religious beliefs and faith

In this area of study students focus on the interplay between religious beliefs and significant life experiences of members. Students consider the relationship between different types of significant life experience and religious beliefs generally. They then undertake a detailed study of one particular significant life experience of a member of a religious tradition or denomination. One or more than one religious tradition or denomination is studied, with an individual selected from each. The significant life experience may be a single event at a particular time or occur over an extended period, and has to be one that informed, reinforced or changed the person's understanding and expression of the meaning of their religious beliefs. Students investigate what happens to an individual's adherence to and understanding of the relevant religious beliefs and related expressions as a result of a significant life experience.

The person and experience studied must have been published in publically accessible documentary, biographical or autobiographical non-fictional material, which provides detailed commentary on the interaction of the related beliefs to their significant life experience.

Outcome 3

On completion of this unit the student should be able to discuss and analyse the interplay between religious beliefs and their expression through related aspects and significant life experience.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 3.

Key knowledge

- the relationship between a range of significant life experiences and religious beliefs for religion in general
- a significant life experience of a member from one or more than one religious tradition or denomination
- the member's level of adherence to, understanding of and faith in, relevant religious beliefs and their engagement with the related expressions prior to the experience, during the experience, and after the experience
- the influence of the member's religious beliefs and related expressions on their interpretation of the significant life experience.

Key skills

- describe the relationship between a range of significant life experiences and religious beliefs
- describe a significant life experience of a member of a religious tradition or denomination
- explain and compare a member's level of adherence to, understanding of and faith in, relevant religious beliefs and their engagement with the related expressions prior to a significant life experience, during the experience and after the experience
- analyse the influence of the member's religious beliefs and related expressions on their interpretation of the significant life experience
- interpret, synthesise and apply primary and secondary source material.

School-based assessment

Satisfactory completion

The award of satisfactory completion for a unit is based on whether the student has demonstrated the set of outcomes specified for the unit. Teachers should use a variety of learning activities and assessment tasks to provide a range of opportunities for students to demonstrate the key knowledge and key skills in the outcomes.

The areas of study and key knowledge and key skills listed for the outcomes should be used for course design and the development of learning activities and assessment tasks.

Assessment of levels of achievement

The student's level of achievement in Unit 3 will be determined by School-assessed Coursework. School-assessed Coursework tasks must be a part of the regular teaching and learning program and must not unduly add to the workload associated with that program. They must be completed mainly in class and within a limited timeframe.

Where teachers provide a range of options for the same School-assessed Coursework task, they should ensure that the options are of comparable scope and demand.

The types and range of forms of School-assessed Coursework for the outcomes are prescribed within the study design. The VCAA publishes *Advice for teachers* for this study, which includes advice on the design of assessment tasks and the assessment of student work for a level of achievement.

Teachers will provide to the VCAA a numerical score representing an assessment of the student's level of achievement. The score must be based on the teacher's assessment of the performance of each student on the tasks set out in the following table.

Contribution to final assessment

School-assessed Coursework for Unit 3 will contribute 25 per cent to the study score.

Outcomes	Marks allocated*	Assessment tasks
<p>Outcome 1</p> <p>Discuss and analyse the nature and purpose of religion and religious beliefs.</p>	30	<p>For each outcome, one or more tasks selected from the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a report • an essay • a case study • analytical exercises • structured questions • extended responses.
<p>Outcome 2</p> <p>Examine how beliefs and their expression in other aspects of religion are intended to respond to the search for meaning.</p>	40	
<p>Outcome 3</p> <p>Discuss and analyse the interplay between religious beliefs and their expression through related aspects and significant life experience.</p>	30	
Total marks	100	

*School-assessed Coursework for Unit 3 contributes 25 per cent.

External assessment

The level of achievement for Units 3 and 4 is also assessed by an end-of-year examination, which will contribute 50 per cent.

Unit 4: Religion, challenge and change

This unit focuses on the interaction over time of religious traditions and the societies of which they are a part. For a large part of human history religion has been a truth narrative, offering a means for finding answers to the big questions of life. Religious traditions are in a dynamic process of engagement and negotiation with members individually and collectively, as well as with other key institutions in wider society associated with power, authority and credibility. Religious traditions are living institutions that participate in and contribute to wider societies – both positively and negatively. They stimulate and support society, acting as levers for change themselves and embracing or resisting forces for change within society.

Religious traditions are in a constant state of development as members apply their talents and faith to extend the intellectual and aesthetic nature of the beliefs, of their expression and of the application to their lives. In the interaction of religious traditions and society there are also opportunities for development from significant challenges including the needs and insights of their membership, and of people and groups within wider society. These challenges and the religious tradition are influenced by broader contexts such as changing economic, political and social conditions.

A challenge is a situation that stimulates a response from society and/or religious traditions. Religious traditions take stances for or against challenges, or they take a stance of indifference. Consequently, actions are implemented which involve different aspects of the religious tradition. These actions may resist or embrace change and affect wider society and/or the religious tradition itself. A key aim beyond resolution of the challenge itself is for the religious tradition to retain integrity, authenticity and, ultimately, identity. However, the interaction between religious traditions and society may not always achieve these aims and there may be a series of interactions as a challenge is negotiated.

In this unit students explore challenge for religious traditions generally over time and then undertake a study of challenge and change for one or more than one religious tradition or denomination. Religious tradition/s or denomination/s are to be selected from one or more than one of the following: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism.

Students consider the aspects on [page 9](#) in their investigation of selected religious tradition/s or denomination/s and religion in general.

Area of Study 1

Challenge and response

In this area of study students investigate how and why religious traditions as a whole, or their denominations, have taken steps from their inception to the present to respond to challenges in the categories of theology, ethics and continued existence.

Religious traditions or their denominations are in a continual process of engagement and negotiation with challenges that may influence them to adopt various stances for, against or of indifference. A stance is a principled perspective which may be expressed in various responses that support this stance, including the option not to respond in any practical or discernible ways. A stance can itself be enough to respond to the challenge and to retain integrity, authenticity and identity for the religious tradition's or denomination's leadership and adherents. With various stances there will be a mixture of supportive responses that attempt to bring about change or attempt to retain the status quo, though these may not always accomplish the desired results.

The impetus for religious traditions or denominations to take a stance can come from a variety of sources. The ability of a religious tradition or denomination to adopt different stances is variously determined by beliefs, authority structures, official teachings, rulings of religious law, tradition, key individuals and attitudes within the religious and wider communities.

Students consider how some aspects of religion are more likely to be involved when taking a stance, such as distinctive beliefs, rituals, religious practices, the interpretation of texts, the application of ethical principles, the nature and role of authority, and the manner of participation within the social structure of a religious tradition or denomination. Students study one or more than one religious tradition or denomination. They develop an overview of four significant challenges for each religious tradition or denomination studied, and the stances and supporting responses taken by the religious tradition/s or denomination/s. Each of the four challenges will encompass one or more than one of the categories of: theology, ethics or continued existence, but as a whole should cover all categories.

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to discuss, analyse and compare stances and supporting responses taken by religions as they are challenged.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

Key knowledge

- challenges involving theology, ethics and continued existence for religion generally over time
- the sources of the challenges and what makes a challenge significant and the aspects of religion which are involved and why
- the stances adopted by religion generally in the face of challenges and why
- an overview of challenges involving theology, ethics and continued existence faced by one or more than one religious tradition or denomination, including:
 - the sources of those challenges
 - when and where those challenges occurred or are occurring
 - the aspects in the religious tradition/s or denomination/s involved
 - what makes the challenges significant to the religious tradition/s or denomination/s
 - the stances, and responses supporting them, taken by the religious tradition/s or denomination/s to each of those challenges.

Key skills

- analyse challenges to religion generally
- explain stances adopted by religion generally in the face of challenges and why
- analyse and compare challenges to specific religious traditions or denominations
- analyse and compare stances and responses to challenges taken by a specific religious tradition or denomination
- interpret, synthesise and apply primary and secondary source material.

Area of Study 2

Interaction of religion and society

Students study one or more than one religious tradition or denomination. For each tradition or denomination selected, they examine in detail one significant challenge that has engaged the religious tradition or denomination and society.

Religious traditions and denominations are in a continual interactive process of engagement and negotiation with their members and with the trends, ideas, events, and innovations found in wider society that can affect one or more aspects of religion and form the broader context of a challenge. Specific people or groups in a religious tradition or denomination, and/or in wider society, may advocate for change or resistance. These sources influence religious traditions and denominations to adopt stances for change, against change or of indifference to the challenge. Stances and supporting responses to the challenge may vary as interactions continue throughout the challenge and the results may or may not produce the desired effects.

The selected challenge can be related to a particular time in the past or present of the religious tradition or denomination, or be a challenge that has recurred and is then studied over a period of time. The selected challenge may have occurred in the past but the responses may be ongoing and the resolution may not yet have been achieved in the present day. Responses may involve advocacy and/or reaction by the religious tradition or denomination at various times.

The challenge should be at a stage where a range of analyses of the impacts of the responses have been made by commentators. The challenge should be different to the challenges identified in the overview in Area of Study 1. Students investigate the broader context leading to the challenge, the sources of the challenge, and the stances and supporting responses adopted by the religious tradition or denomination to the challenge. They also examine the impact of the responses.

Outcome 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to discuss the interactions within a religious tradition or denomination and between a religious tradition or denomination and wider society in relation to a significant challenge, and examine the effects of these interactions.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 2.

Key knowledge

- for one or more than one religious tradition or denomination:
 - a significant challenge involving at least one of the categories of theology, ethics and continued existence
 - the broader context of the particular challenge
 - when and where the challenge occurred or is occurring
 - the sources of the significant challenge coming from within the religious tradition or denomination and from interactions with society
- how specific aspects of religion were or are involved
- the stances and supporting responses adopted by the religious tradition or denomination, in relation to the challenge
- the reasons and intended outcomes for the stances and supporting responses
- the influence of the religious tradition's or denomination's stances and supporting responses on the challenge itself
- the influence of the responses on the religious tradition or denomination and on wider society.

Key skills

- analyse a significant challenge faced by a religious tradition or denomination
- explain stances and supporting responses adopted by a religious tradition or denomination in relation to a challenge
- analyse the influence of stances and supporting responses on a challenge itself and on wider society
- interpret, synthesise and apply primary and secondary source material.

School-based assessment

Satisfactory completion

The award of satisfactory completion for a unit is based on whether the student has demonstrated the set of outcomes specified for the unit. Teachers should use a variety of learning activities and assessment tasks to provide a range of opportunities for students to demonstrate the key knowledge and key skills in the outcomes.

The areas of study and key knowledge and key skills listed for the outcomes should be used for course design and the development of learning activities and assessment tasks.

Assessment of levels of achievement

The student's level of achievement in Unit 4 will be determined by School-assessed Coursework. School-assessed Coursework tasks must be a part of the regular teaching and learning program and must not unduly add to the workload associated with that program. They must be completed mainly in class and within a limited timeframe.

Where teachers provide a range of options for the same School-assessed Coursework task, they should ensure that the options are of comparable scope and demand.

The types and range of forms of School-assessed Coursework for the outcomes are prescribed within the study design. The VCAA publishes *Advice for teachers* for this study, which includes advice on the design of assessment tasks and the assessment of student work for a level of achievement.

Teachers will provide to the VCAA a numerical score representing an assessment of the student's level of achievement. The score must be based on the teacher's assessment of the performance of each student on the tasks set out in the following table.

Contribution to final assessment

School-assessed Coursework for Unit 4 will contribute 25 per cent to the study score.

Outcomes	Marks allocated*	Assessment tasks
<p>Outcome 1</p> <p>Discuss, analyse and compare stances and supporting responses taken by religions as they are challenged.</p>	50	<p>For each outcome one or more tasks selected from the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a report • an essay • a case study • analytical exercises • structured questions • extended responses.
<p>Outcome 2</p> <p>Discuss the interactions within a religious tradition or denomination and between a religious tradition or denomination and wider society in relation to a significant challenge, and examine the effects of these interactions.</p>	50	
Total marks	100	

*School-assessed Coursework for Unit 4 contributes 25 per cent.

External assessment

The level of achievement for Units 3 and 4 is also assessed by an end-of-year examination.

Contribution to final assessment

The examination will contribute 50 per cent.

End-of-year examination

Description

The examination will be set by a panel appointed by the VCAA. All the key knowledge and key skills that underpin the outcomes in Units 3 and 4 are examinable.

Conditions

The examination will be completed under the following conditions:

- Duration: two hours.
- Date: end-of-year, on a date to be published annually by the VCAA.
- VCAA examination rules will apply. Details of these rules are published annually in the [VCE and VCAL Administrative Handbook](#).
- The examination will be marked by assessors appointed by the VCAA.

Further advice

The VCAA publishes specifications for all VCE examinations on the VCAA website. Examination specifications include details about the sections of the examination, their weighting, the question format/s and any other essential information. The specifications are published in the first year of implementation of the revised Unit 3 and 4 sequence together with any sample material