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Important information

Accreditation period

Units 1–4: 1 January 2023 – 31 December 2027

Implementation of this study commences in 2023.

Other sources of information

The [VCAA Bulletin](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/news-and-events/bulletins-and-updates/bulletin/Pages/index.aspx) is the only official source of changes to regulations and accredited studies. TheBulletinalso 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](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Footer/Pages/Subscribe.aspx) on the VCAA website.

To assist teachers in developing courses, the VCAA publishes online [Support materials](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/vce/vce-study-designs/religion-and-society/Pages/Index.aspx) (incorporating the previously known Advice for teachers).

The current [VCE and VCAL Administrative Handbook](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/administration/vce-vcal-handbook/Pages/index.aspx) 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.

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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 VCE 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. Religion initiates changes to society and vice versa, and the consequences of these dynamic processes are part of the scope of this study. Some religious traditions continue to thrive while others have declined or disappeared or parts of them have been assimilated into other religions, which allows their ideas to live on in some form. New religious movements can develop into religious traditions.

In 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 religious denominations in societies where multiple worldviews coexist and consider the experiences of members as those members engage with their religious tradition individually and communally. This study respects and encourages an open and objective inquiry, without partiality towards any one religion.

For the purposes of this study, the term ‘religion’ can be understood as encompassing all related phenomena, including spiritualities.

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; conversely, society has not always interacted positively with religion and has at times supported the unethical behaviour of religions and 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 spiritual and religious traditions negotiate significant ethical issues. Spiritualities and religious traditions offer value systems that guide their adherents’ interactions with society and influence society’s decision-making. This study offers an insight into the spiritual and religious beliefs and other aspects of religion that express these value systems. Students study the role of religion in supporting adherents to grapple with the big questions of human existence and to respond to significant life experiences.

Through the study of 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 overall but an enhanced role in other settings.

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 spirituality, religion and new religious movements
* understand and respect the spirituality and religious beliefs of others, and acknowledge their freedom and right to hold those religious beliefs
* discuss the nature and purpose of religion in the human search for meaning
* understand the interplay between society and individual identity formation through membership of spiritualities, religious traditions and religious denominations
* reflect on the capacity of spirituality and religion to provide ways of making meaning from significant life experiences for individuals
* reflect on the interaction between society and the collective identity engendered by spiritualities, religious traditions and religious denominations
* analyse 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.

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 and Unit 4 as a sequence. Units 1–4 are designed to the equivalent standard of the final two years of secondary education. All VCE studies are benchmarked against comparable national and international curriculums.

Duration

Each unit involves at least 50 hours of scheduled classroom instruction.

Changes to the study design

During its period of accreditation minor changes to the study will be announced in the [VCAA Bulletin](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/news-and-events/bulletins-and-updates/bulletin/Pages/index.aspx).   
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 theBulletin*.*

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](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/administration/vce-vcal-handbook/Pages/index.aspx). 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 Support materials provide 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.

Child Safe Standards

Schools and education and training providers are required to comply with the Child Safe Standards made under the Victorian *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005*. Registered schools are required to comply with *Ministerial Order No. 1359 Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises*. For further information, consult the websites of the [Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority](https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe/Pages/Home.aspx), the [Commission for Children and Young People](https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/) and the [Department of Education and Training](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/child-safe-standards/policy).

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 (SAC) as specified in the VCE study design, 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 in the study and receive an 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 completed the study. Teachers should refer to the current [*VCE and VCAL Administrative Handbook*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/administration/vce-vcal-handbook/Pages/index.aspx) 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*](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/administration/vce-vcal-handbook/Pages/index.aspx) for authentication rules and strategies.

The aspects of religion

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

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

Unit 1: The role of religion in society

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

A range of examples is studied throughout the unit. For all areas of study, students explore detailed examples from more than one spirituality, religious tradition or religious denomination. These may be from one or more 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:

* Spiritualities of First Nations peoples (such as in Australia and Oceania; Africa; Canada and the rest of the Americas; Siberia and the rest of Russia; Scandinavia)
* Spiritual and religious ideas in prehistory (associated with, for example, hunter-gatherer societies, Çatalhöyük, Göbekli Tepe, Jericho, Lascaux, Stonehenge)
* Religious traditions of ancient civilisations and empires (such as Babylonia, Canaan, Ancient China, Ancient Egypt, the Indus Valley civilisation, Ancient Rome, Sumer)
* Asian religious and philosophical traditions (such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Jainism, Shintoism, Sikhism, Taoism)
* Abrahamic religions (such as the Bahaʼi Faith, Christianity, Islam, Judaism).

Students consider the aspects of religion on [page 10](#TheAspectsofReligion) when investigating selected spiritualities, 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 meaning to individuals and communities. Religion has often been drawn on to provide explanations for all phenomena, offering a means for finding answers to the big questions of life and answering such questions. Students examine the aspects of religion in general, and then apply the aspects of religion as a framework to further examine spiritualities, religious traditions and religious denominations. They also study the interrelation of these aspects generally, and apply the aspects to spiritualities, religious traditions and religious denominations studied. They investigate how the aspects may vary between spiritualities, religious traditions and religious denominations.

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to discuss the nature and purpose of religion and examine the aspects of religion as they apply to selected examples.

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 purposes of religion over time
* the aspects of religion and how they are interrelated
* answers to questions about the origins of life and existence offered by religion
* spiritual and religious narratives that explain truths of all existence
* the role that religion can have in shaping and giving meaning to particular needs of individuals and communities
* the role of religion generally in giving expression to beliefs through the other aspects of religion

Key skills

* discuss the nature and purposes of religion over time
* examine the aspects of religion and their interrelationship
* apply the aspects of religion to spiritualities, religious traditions and religious denominations
* analyse the ways that spiritual and religious narratives can explain truths of all existence
* describe the role of religion in shaping and giving meaning to the particular needs of individuals   
  and communities
* 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. They consider the factors that influence the roles of religion and the effects that developments in society might have on religion.

Spirituality and religion have been an integral part of the development of human societies, forming part of cultural knowledge and understanding that is passed from generation to generation through a process of spiritual and religious socialisation. As people spread across the globe, they encountered and exchanged religious and cultural ideas, which informed the development of aspects of religion. Over time, spiritualities, religious traditions and religious denominations have encountered challenges from 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 spiritualities, religious traditions and religious denominations taking various roles to initiate, endorse, modify or resist the spread of ideas and movements in society.

At times in history some spiritualities, religious traditions and religious denominations have lost the authority and power to explain meaning for their society and have been abandoned; other spiritualities, religious traditions and religious denominations have adapted and been resilient or were re-established in a different form. Some spiritualities, religious traditions and religious denominations 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 of religion and the interrelationship between religion and society over time.

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 and religious traditions or religious denominations have played roles in society over time
* the spiritual and religious ideas that pass from one generation to the next via a process of socialisation that includes religion
* how developments in technology, philosophy and science from both within and outside religious traditions have affected roles and relevant aspects of religion in society
* other ideas and movements that have influenced and are influencing roles and relevant aspects of religion in society
* the reasons why spiritualities, religious traditions and religious denominations were resilient, changed or adapted, or ceased to exist
* the reasons why some ideas from spiritualities, religious traditions or religious denominations become part of other spiritualities, religious traditions or religious denominations

Key skills

* identify the factors that influence roles of religion over time
* summarise the spiritual and religious ideas that pass from one generation to the next via a process of socialisation that includes religion
* explain the effects that developments in society may have on religion and vice versa
* discuss roles that spiritualities, religious traditions and religious denominations play in initiating, endorsing, modifying or resisting the spread of ideas and movements in society
* discuss the reasons why spiritualities, religious traditions and religious denominations were resilient, changed or adapted, or ceased to exist and the relevant aspects affected
* interpret, synthesise and apply primary and secondary source material

Area of Study 3

Religion in Australia

In this area of study students consider spiritualities and religion in Australia, past and present, and the influences on Australian religious composition, in particular from colonisation, migration and secularisation. They explore how the communities and later institutions of these spiritualities, religious traditions and religious denominations perceived themselves and expressed their collective identity in Australia. This expression of collective identity may have been cohesive or diverse. Students also examine the influence   
of religion on the personal identity of members, who may adopt religious ideas or practices from other spiritualities, religious traditions and religious denominations. They explore the influence of spiritualities, religious traditions and religious denominations 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 spiritualities, religious traditions and religious denominations in Australia and trends of religious adherence 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 spiritualities, major religious traditions and religious denominations in Australia, past and present
* the influence of government policy on the religious composition of Australian society over time
* the influence of religious and non-religious trends on the religious composition of Australian society
* the ways that collective identity is expressed by spiritualities, religious traditions and religious denominations 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
* interactions between different spiritualities, religious traditions and religious denominations and other people, groups and organisations within wider Australian society and reasons for these interactions, in particular:
* the roles of spiritualities, religious traditions or religious denominations in Australian society
* the role of religion in providing social infrastructure in Australian society
* the role of interfaith and ecumenical interaction in Australia

Key skills

* interpret data on the distribution of and adherence to spiritualities, major religious traditions and religious denominations in Australia, past and present
* analyse the factors and trends that influence the religious composition of Australian society over time
* examine how communities and other institutions of spiritualities, religious traditions and religious denominations perceive themselves and express their collective identity in Australia through relevant aspects
* examine the influence of spiritualities, religious traditions and religious denominations on the development of social infrastructure in Australia
* examine the role of interfaith and ecumenical interaction in Australia
* 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 in this unit may be selected from the following:

* analytical exercises
* case studies
* debates
* essays
* extended responses
* multimedia presentations
* structured questions
* visual analyses.

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 spirituality, religious tradition or religious denomination? 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 within a culture at a particular point in time.

Today, religious and philosophical traditions interact with other sources of authority and 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 perspectives and values remain fundamental to many legal and social systems, and to codes of behaviour. They 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 10](#TheAspectsofReligion) 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 that 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, virtue 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, such as divine command. Ethical methods and practical moral judgment are subject to varying emphases on factors such as absolutism, anarchy, anomie, circumstances, divinity, duties, emotionalism, fear, institutions, laws (secular and religious), love, mandates, natural law, outcomes, poetic justice, pragmatism, reason, relativism, stakeholders, scientism, social justice, social order and social norms, subjectivism, the common good and tradition.

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
* a variety of methods of ethical decision-making and the theories that support them
* how the aspects of religion relate to ethical decision-making
* 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, common sense, assumptions, authorities, worldviews, values, codes of behaviour, and the competing rights and responsibilities of individuals, groups and society

Key skills

* examine concepts used in ethical decision-making
* discuss a variety of methods of ethical decision-making and the theories that support them
* analyse how the aspects of religion relate to ethical decision-making
* explain the role of various influences involved in the process of forming practical moral judgments, including ethical methods of decision-making and other factors
* interpret, synthesise and apply primary and secondary source material

Area of Study 2

Religion and ethics

In this area of study students explore religious ethical perspectives and other influences on the formation of moral judgments of at least two spiritualities, religious traditions and/or religious denominations, in societies where multiple worldviews coexist. They also explore how philosophical ideas and religion have influenced each other’s understanding of ethics. Certain authorities, values, norms, ideas and ethical principles inform broad ethical perspectives and moral judgments within religious and philosophical traditions. Other aspects of religion – in particular beliefs, texts and sacred stories – inform the decision-making process for religious traditions.

Outcome 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse how ethical perspectives and moral judgments are formed within at least two spiritualities, religious traditions and/or religious denominations, 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 spiritualities, religious traditions and/or religious denominations, in societies in which multiple worldviews coexist
* the aspects of religion related to ethical decision-making processes in spiritualities, religious traditions or religious denominations, other than ethics
* ethical decision-making methods, including both the influence of philosophy on the ethical perspectives of spiritualities, religious traditions or religious denominations, and the ethical perspectives of spiritualities, religious traditions or religious denominations on philosophy

Key skills

* discuss the authorities, principles, values, norms and ideas informing ethical perspectives of at least two spiritualities, religious traditions and/or religious denominations, in societies in which multiple worldviews coexist
* examine the aspects of religion related to ethical decision-making processes in spiritualities, religious traditions or religious denominations, other than ethics
* analyse ethical perspectives and influences on the formation of moral judgments of at least two spiritualities, religious traditions and/or religious denominations
* analyse the ethical decision-making methods of spiritualities, religious traditions or religious denominations that have informed philosophy, other disciplines and wider society
* 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 spiritualities, religious traditions or religious denominations; 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 examine two or more debates on ethical issues   
in societies in which multiple worldviews coexist, and to which spiritualities, religious traditions and religious denominations contribute.

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 investigated are regarded as ethical issues
* the aspects of religion related to ethical decision-making processes in spiritualities, religious traditions or religious denominations, other than ethics
* 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 various participants’ contributions to the debates

Key skills

* justify why the issues investigated are regarded as ethical issues
* examine the aspects of religion related to ethical decision-making processes in spiritualities, religious traditions or religious denominations, other than ethics
* examine the debates about ethical issues in societies where multiple worldviews coexist
* examine the ethical perspectives and moral judgments presented in the arguments by those participating in the debates
* evaluate the ethical decision-making methods involved in the debate process, and their strengths   
  and weaknesses
* evaluate the influence of various participants’ contributions to the debates
* interpret, synthesise and apply primary and secondary 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 in this unit may be selected from the following:

* analytical exercises
* case studies
* debates
* essays
* extended responses
* multimedia presentations
* reports
* structured questions.

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 search for meaning, various spiritual, religious, philosophical, scientific and ideological worldviews have been developed. Religion has developed answers in the form of a truth narrative: 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 also attempt to express and 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 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 or religious denomination.

In this unit students study the purposes of religion generally and then consider the religious beliefs developed by a religious tradition or religious denomination in response to the big questions of life. Students study how particular beliefs within a religious tradition or religious 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 experiences and religion.

Religious traditions or religious denominations are to be selected from Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism.

Students consider the aspects of religion on [page 10](#aspects) when investigating religion in general and selected religious traditions or religious denominations.

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 includes a general study of the nature 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 religious tradition or religious denomination. Religious 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 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 nature and purpose of religion in the search for meaning, which includes questions and answers relating to the big questions of life
* the nature of religious beliefs in general
* the purpose of religious beliefs in the search for meaning
* for one religious tradition or religious 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 religious beliefs

Key skills

* examine the aspects of religion and explain their interrelationship
* analyse the nature and purpose of religion and religious beliefs in the search for meaning
* examine a range of religious beliefs related to one religious tradition or religious denomination
* 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 other aspects of religion. Students study how the meaning of beliefs are expressed through other aspects of religion. They consider the roles 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 other aspects of the selected religious tradition or religious denomination. They examine how the selected beliefs and their expression in each of the other aspects are intended by the selected religious tradition or religious denomination to support meaning.

Outcome 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to examine how beliefs and their expression through 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 expressing meaning and 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 or religious denomination:
* 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 or religious denomination to support meaning

Key skills

* analyse, for religion in general, the role of each of the aspects, other than beliefs, in expressing meaning and responding to the search for meaning
* explain how the meaning of beliefs is expressed through the other aspects of religion
* examine how the selected beliefs and their expression in each of the other aspects are intended   
  by the selected religious tradition or religious denomination to support meaning
* interpret, synthesise and apply primary and secondary source material

Area of Study 3

Significant life experiences, religious beliefs and faith

In this area of study students focus on the interplay between religion and significant life experiences of members of religious traditions and religious denominations. Students consider the relationship between different types of significant life experiences and religious beliefs generally. They then undertake a detailed study of one particular significant life experience of a member of one selected religious tradition or religious denomination. The significant life experience may be a single event at a particular time or occur over an extended period. It has to be an experience that informed, reinforced or changed the person’s faith in and understanding of beliefs and their engagement with the expression of those beliefs. Students investigate what happens to an individual’s adherence to and understanding of the relevant religious beliefs and related expressions in the other aspects as a result of a significant life experience.

The person and experience studied must have been published in publicly accessible documentary, biographical or autobiographical non-fictional material. The source(s) must provide detailed commentary   
on the interaction of the related beliefs, and their expression in other aspects, to the member of the religious tradition’s significant life experience. The person must be a member of a religious tradition and the significant life experience cannot be one of conversion from one religious tradition or religious denomination to another.

Outcome 3

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

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 different types of significant life experiences and religious beliefs, for religion in general
* a significant life experience of a member from one religious tradition or religious denomination:
* the member’s level of adherence to, understanding of and faith in relevant religious beliefs, and their engagement with the expressions through related aspects of religion before the significant life 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

* discuss the relationship between different types of significant life experiences and religious beliefs generally
* analyse a significant life experience of a member of a religious tradition or religious denomination
* explain and compare the member’s level of adherence to, understanding of and faith in relevant religious beliefs and their engagement with expressions through related aspects of religion before the 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 Support materials 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** |
| **Outcome 1**  Analyse the nature and purpose of religion and religious beliefs. | **40** | For each outcome, select a different type of task from the following:   * analytical exercises * case studies * essays * extended responses * structured questions * visual analyses. |
| **Outcome 2**  Examine how beliefs and their expression in other aspects of religion are intended to respond to the search for meaning. | **30** |
| **Outcome 3**  Analyse the interplay between religious beliefs and their expression through related aspects of religion and significant life experiences. | **30** |
| **Total marks** | **100** |  |

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 to the study score.

Unit 4: Religion, challenge and change

This unit focuses on the interaction over time of religious traditions and religious denominations and the societies of which they are a part. For a large part of human history religion has been drawn on as a truth narrative, offering a means for finding answers to the big questions of life. Religious traditions and religious denominations 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 and religious denominations are living institutions that interact with society and can likewise be influenced by society. They can stimulate and support society, acting as levers for change themselves and embracing or resisting forces for change within society.

Religious traditions and religious denominations are in a constant state of development as members apply their talents and faith to extend the intellectual and aesthetic nature of a tradition’s or denomination’s beliefs, of the expression of these beliefs and of the application of these beliefs to their lives. Opportunities for development also come from significant challenges in the interaction of religious traditions and religious denominations and society, including the needs and insights of their members and other people and groups within wider society. A challenge is a situation that stimulates a response from society and/or religious traditions and religious denominations. These challenges and the religious tradition and religious denomination are influenced by broader contexts such as changing economic and environmental conditions, and political, social or technological developments.

Religious traditions and religious denominations can take stances for or against challenges, or they can take a stance of indifference. Consequently, actions that involve different aspects of the religious tradition or religious denomination are implemented. These actions may resist or embrace change and affect wider society and/or the religious tradition or religious denomination itself. A key aim beyond resolution of the challenge itself is for religious traditions to retain integrity, authenticity, authority, adherents and, ultimately, identity. However, the interaction between religious traditions and religious denominations 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 challenges for religious traditions or religious denominations generally over time and then undertake a study of challenge and change for a religious tradition or religious denomination.

Religious traditions or religious denominations are to be selected from Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism.

Students consider the aspects of religion on [page 10](#aspects) in their investigation of selected religious tradition(s) or religious 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 and religious 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 to the challenge. A stance is a principled perspective, and a stance may be expressed in various responses that support the stance, including not responding in any practical or discernible way. A stance can itself be enough to respond to the challenge and to retain integrity, authenticity, authority and identity for the religious tradition’s or religious denomination’s leadership and adherents. With various stances there will be a mixture of supporting 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 religious denominations to take a stance can come from a variety of sources. The ability of a religious tradition or religious 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 one religious tradition or religious denomination 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 religious denomination. They develop an overview of challenges to the religious tradition or religious denomination. Three significant challenges are selected, and the stances and supporting responses taken by the religious tradition or religious denomination are studied. Each of the selected challenges should encompass one or more of the categories of theology, ethics and continued existence, but the student’s study as a whole should cover all categories.

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse and compare stances and supporting responses taken by religious traditions or religious denominations 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

* an overview of significant challenges involving theology, ethics and continued existence for religious traditions or religious denominations­ generally over time
* the sources of significant challenges, what makes a challenge significant and which aspects of religion are likely to be involved
* the stances adopted by religion generally in the face of significant challenges and why such stances are taken
* from an overview of challenges to the selected religious tradition or religious denomination, three significant challenges involving one or more of theology, ethics and continued existence, including:
* the sources of those challenges
* when those challenges occurred or are occurring
* the aspects of the religious tradition or religious denomination involved
* what makes the selected challenges significant to the religious tradition or religious denomination
* the stances, and supporting responses, taken by the religious tradition or religious denomination to each of those challenges

Key skills

* discuss significant challenges involving theology, ethics and continued existence for religious traditions or religious denominations generally over time
* compare the sources of challenges, what makes a challenge significant and which aspects of religion are likely to be involved
* examine the stances adopted by religion generally in the face of significant challenges and why such stances are taken
* analyse and compare three significant challenges from an overview of challenges to the selected religious tradition or religious denomination involving one or more of theology, ethics and continued existence
* interpret, synthesise and apply primary and secondary source material

Area of Study 2

Interaction of religion and society

Students examine in detail one significant challenge that has engaged or continues to engage a religious tradition or religious denomination and society.

Religious traditions and religious 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 or within the religious tradition or religious denomination 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 religious denomination, and/or in wider society, may advocate for supporting, resisting or taking no discernible action in response to the challenge. The sources of challenges influence religious traditions and religious denominations to adopt stances for support, resistance or 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 may be related to a particular time in the past or present of the religious tradition   
or religious denomination. It may 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 religious denomination at various times.

The challenge should be at a stage where a range of analyses of the influence of the responses have been made by commentators, thus enabling the student to use primary and secondary source material. The challenge should be different from the challenges studied in Area of Study 1.

Students investigate the broader context leading to the challenge, the sources of the challenge, relevant aspects of religion, and the stances and supporting responses adopted by the religious tradition or religious denomination to the challenge. They also examine the influence of the responses on the religious tradition or religious denomination and, where appropriate, on wider society.

Outcome 2

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

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

Key knowledge

* the interaction between religion and society
* for one religious tradition or religious denomination:
* a significant challenge involving at least one of the categories of theology, ethics and continued existence
* the broader context of the particular significant challenge
* when the significant challenge occurred or is occurring
* the source(s) of the significant challenge coming from within the religious tradition or religious denomination and/or from interactions within a society in a certain historic or ongoing context
* how specific aspects of religion were or are involved
* the stances and supporting responses adopted by the religious tradition or religious denomination in relation to the significant challenge
* the reasons and intended outcomes for the stances and supporting responses
* the influence of the religious tradition’s or religious denomination’s stances and supporting responses on the challenge itself
* the influence of the responses on the religious tradition or religious denomination and, where appropriate, on wider society

Key skills

* discuss the interaction between religion and society
* analyse a significant challenge faced by a religious tradition or religious denomination and society
* examine a significant challenge that has engaged a religious tradition or religious denomination, including the category of challenge, context, time period and source(s), and whether interactions are historic or ongoing
* examine how specific aspects of religion were or are involved
* evaluate the influence of stances and supporting responses on the religious tradition or religious denomination and whether they achieved their intended outcomes
* assess the influence of the stances and supporting responses of the religious tradition or religious denomination on the challenge itself and, where appropriate, 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 Support materials 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** |
| **Outcome 1**  Analyse and compare stances and supporting responses taken by religious traditions or religious denominations as they are challenged. | **50** | For each outcome, select a different type of task from the following:   * analytical exercises * case studies * essays * extended responses * structured questions * visual analyses. |
| **Outcome 2**  Discuss the interactions within a religious tradition or religious denomination and between a religious tradition or religious denomination and wider society in relation to a significant challenge, and evaluate the influence of the stances and responses on these interactions. | **50** |
| **Total marks** | **100** |  |

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 to the study score.

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: 2 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](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/administration/vce-vcal-handbook/Pages/index.aspx)
* 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.