



RELIGION AND LIFE

ATAR course

Year 12 syllabus for teaching from 2027

Acknowledgement of Country

Kaya. The School Curriculum and Standards Authority (the Authority) acknowledges that our offices are on Whadjuk Noongar boodjar and that we deliver our services on the country of many traditional custodians and language groups throughout Western Australia. The Authority acknowledges the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We offer our respect to Elders past and present.

Important information

As part of the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) Refreshment, the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (the Authority) has revised the course rationale and aims, and updated the General Capabilities to create clearer connections with the syllabus content.

This syllabus is effective from 1 January 2027.

Users of this syllabus are responsible for checking its currency.

Syllabuses are formally reviewed by the Authority on a cyclical basis, typically every five years.

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Rationale

The Religion and Life ATAR course explores the relationship between religion, society and individuals. It provides students with opportunities to critically examine one or more religions to develop a deeper understanding of the nature and influence of religion and the role it plays in shaping human experience.

In this course, students can expect to study one or more religions, focusing on their beliefs and practices. They will explore the characteristics of religion, their origins, foundations, social influence and development over time whilst critically analysing the role religion has in society. By studying the course, students gain insight into the challenges and opportunities religions face in modern society.

Students develop critical thinking and analytical skills by engaging with diverse perspectives, enabling them to evaluate religious traditions within broader social and historical contexts. They refine their ability to interpret and assess primary and secondary sources in order to foster an educated and reflective approach to understanding religion's role in contemporary life.

By studying the course, students will acquire the knowledge and skills which will empower them to navigate and contribute to discussions on ethical, social and cultural issues influenced by religion. Understanding the interplay between religion and life enhances students' ability to engage meaningfully in an increasingly diverse and pluralistic society.

The study of the Religion and Life ATAR course is valuable for careers in theology, sociology, anthropology and international relations, as well as careers requiring cultural awareness and ethical reasoning.

Aims

The Religion and Life ATAR course aims to develop students' ability to:

- understand the nature of religion and how people interact with religion
- understand the interplay between religion and society
- use religious inquiry skills to investigate, analyse, evaluate and communicate an informed and critical understanding of issues and ideas associated with the interplay between religion and life.

Organisation

This course is organised into a Year 11 syllabus and a Year 12 syllabus. The cognitive complexity of the syllabus content increases from Year 11 to Year 12.

Structure of the syllabus

The Year 12 syllabus is divided into two units which are delivered as a pair. The notional time for the pair of units is 110 class contact hours.

Unit 3

The focus for this unit is the connection between past and present experiences of religion. Students analyse the impact of changes within society and how these changes shape the way individuals and groups interact with religion. They further develop research skills for conducting an inquiry, processing information and, communicating findings about the interplay between religion and life.

Unit 4

The focus for this unit is the interplay between religion and life. Students explore how religion responds to, and interacts with, issues that arise within society. They further develop research skills for conducting an inquiry, processing information, and communicating findings about the interplay between religion and life.

Each unit includes:

- a unit description – a short description of the focus of the unit
- unit content – the content to be taught and learned.

Organisation of content

The course content is divided into three content areas:

- The nature of religion
- The influence of religion
- Religious inquiry and learning skills.

The nature of religion

The search for meaning

People search for and find meaning in life in many different ways. In response to the search for meaning, many people find answers in religion and choose to follow a particular religious way of life. How a person interacts with religion is shaped by the context of their life, both social and personal. There are many examples of people who illustrate the role religion plays in a person's search for meaning in life.

Religious belief and practice

Within each religion, as well as across religions, there is complexity and diversity. In general terms, a religion is a system of beliefs and practices that guides how people live. Each religion offers particular insights and understandings about life. These find expression in a variety of religious beliefs, teachings and practices. Followers of each religion also come together to express aspects of their religion through worship, celebrations, rituals, and by observing special events and seasons.

Religious structures and processes

The structures and processes at work within a particular religion play an important role in shaping how and why a religion operates. An important part of this is also the organisation and structure of each religion. Such organisational characteristics are constantly being tested or re-shaped by the interplay that takes place between individuals, society, the beliefs of the religion, as well as its history and traditions.

The influence of religion

The place of religion in society

Religious traditions interact with specific cultures in complex and dynamic ways. These interactions influence how religion is perceived and understood within society, particularly around matters of concern to religion. In a multicultural and multifaith society, such as Australia, there is a rich diversity of religious traditions. This diversity of religious traditions reflects many aspects of religion and society throughout the world.

Religion in historical contexts

Religions are not static. They have been shaped, and continue to be shaped over time, by a dynamic interaction with particular places, times and people. Understanding the development of a particular religion is enhanced by a focus on the foundation and growth of the religion and how the religion has responded to changes in society.

Current issues for religion

All religions, in order to remain both authentic and relevant, constantly reflect on how best to respond to changing values and attitudes in society. Rapid changes in such things as technology, the media, family life, marriage, and other dimensions of social life all have the potential to create issues within society that in turn become matters of concern or interest for particular religions.

Religious inquiry and learning skills

A study of religion involves the use of skills that promote:

- specific and technical language
- particular thought processes
- the capacity to think and express understandings about religion in an informed and critical manner.

Understanding the interplay between religion, society and individuals involves a capacity to conduct meaningful inquiries. Inquiry utilises a range of skills and involves a number of important and related steps:

- identifying a research focus
- gathering, processing and synthesising relevant information
- communicating effectively the findings of an inquiry.

Learning in the unit is supported by using a range of skills that focus on:

- terms and concepts
- research
- analysis and use of sources
- explanation and communication.

Representation of the General Capabilities

The General Capabilities encompass the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that will support students to live and work successfully now and into the future. They are not assessed unless identified within the specified unit content. Teachers should find opportunities to incorporate the following General Capabilities into the teaching and learning program for the Religion and Life ATAR course.

Critical and creative thinking

Students delve deeply into the implications of ideas and information they investigate. The demands of inquiry include the ability to pose intelligent questions, interrogate, select and cross-reference sources, and develop interpretations based on an assessment of the evidence and reasoning. Students identify possible weaknesses in their own positions and analyse, evaluate and synthesise alternative interpretations and representations relevant to a study of religion and life.

Ethical understanding

Students explore and understand, in ethical ways, the diverse perspectives and circumstances that shape the actions and possible motivations of people as they investigate and respond to issues of concern in society for religion. Students have opportunities, both independently and collaboratively, to explore the values, beliefs and principles that are the basis for the motives, judgements and actions of people and particular religions.

Intercultural understanding

Students acquire knowledge of culturally diverse perspectives and learn how these relate to a study of religion. They develop an understanding of the diverse societies and cultures that shape religion and how people interact with religion. They learn how to recognise, appreciate and represent different ways of life and the cultural diversity that exist in the contemporary world. They also explore different perspectives, the contexts for those perspectives, and the implications these may have for religion and people in the contemporary world.

Literacy

Students select and use content relevant to a study of religion and life from a variety of print, oral, visual, spatial and electronic forms. They learn to interpret and infer meaning from a variety of sources. They identify relevant evidence by analysing and evaluating texts for authority, reliability, relevance and accuracy. Students create a wide range of texts to communicate, explore, discuss, explain and argue a point of view about the interplay between religion and life. By selecting and employing text structure and language knowledge, students express their thoughts and ideas logically and fluently, supported by evidence. They learn to monitor their own language use for accuracy in the use of religious terms, clarity of ideas and explanations, conciseness of expression, and use language effectively to articulate a position.

Numeracy

Students recognise, evaluate and represent patterns and relationships, chronologically and spatially, through the numerical use of scaled timelines, tables, graphs and maps when assessing and communicating the nature of religion and its place in the world. They support their views with data, some of which is numerical in nature. Students develop numeracy capability when they analyse, interpret and draw conclusions from statistical information about the interplay between religion and life.

Personal and social capability

Students develop and practise skills that enhance their ability to effectively communicate their viewpoint to others. They work both collaboratively and independently as part of their learning and when conducting research. When examining the relationships between individuals and diverse social groups that interact on matters related to, and important to, a study of religion, students develop increasing social awareness and their ability to appreciate the perspectives and experiences of others.

Addressing the other General Capabilities

Although the following General Capabilities have not been identified as a focus in the Religion and Life ATAR Year 12 syllabus, teachers may find opportunities to incorporate them into the teaching and learning program.

- Digital literacy

Such opportunities may occur through the application of different contexts, pedagogical practices and/or assessment strategies that relate to the syllabus as part of the teaching and learning program.

Summary representation of the General Capabilities in the Religion and Life ATAR course

The unit content and assessment types for this course provide students with the opportunity to develop the General Capabilities summarised in the table below.

Year	Course	Course type	General Capabilities						
			CCT	DL	EU	IU	L	N	PSC
Year 11	Religion and Life (AEREL)	ATAR	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year 12	Religion and Life (ATREL)	ATAR	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Key

CCT: Critical and creative thinking, DL: Digital literacy, EU: Ethical understanding, IU: Intercultural understanding, L: Literacy, N: Numeracy, PSC: Personal and social capability

Representation of the Cross-curriculum Priorities

The Cross-curriculum Priorities address contemporary issues which students face in a globalised world. Teachers may find opportunities to incorporate them into the teaching and learning program for the Religion and Life ATAR course. The Cross-curriculum Priorities are not assessed unless they are identified within the specified unit content.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures

The rationale for the Religion and Life ATAR course requires students to focus on at least one religion in their study. A religion, as understood within the course rationale, includes a focus on Aboriginal spiritualities. The interaction of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures with particular religions may also form part of the learning of a unit. Finally, exploring aspects of the past or present context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples offer opportunities for developing an understanding of the place of religion in Australian society or issues that exist within society, including the dichotomy between Aboriginal spirituality and introduced religions.

Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia

This priority provides an important context for understanding the interplay between religion and life. Much of what is understood about religion and particular religions originates in the history and culture of Asia. A study of the interplay between religion and life will therefore naturally explore Asia, in all its diversity, and Australia's engagement with Asia. Students have opportunities to explore particular religious traditions that arose and grew within the Asia region; how religion has interacted with this region over time; and the nature of past and ongoing links between Australia and Asia involving religion. Students develop the knowledge, understanding and skills which make it possible for them to engage actively and effectively with peoples from the Asia region, particularly in terms of how peoples of the Asia region relate to religion.

Sustainability

Each religion has insights, beliefs and practices that have the potential to impact upon how people respond to issues of sustainability. These beliefs play an important role in shaping how people understand and interact with the world they live in. Religions also contribute to how people understand and interact with the promotion of healthy social, economic and ecological patterns of living for our collective wellbeing and survival. The study of Religion and Life engages with a diversity of world views, including those on ecosystems. It informs the values of people and the views they hold about social justice and how these values and views relate to sustainability. In promoting inquiry skills, the Religion and Life ATAR course helps build the capacity of students to think and act in ways that are necessary to create a more sustainable future. These course skills promote reflective thinking processes and empower young people to be active participants in society.

Unit 3

Unit description

The focus for this unit is the connection between past and present experiences of religion. Students analyse the impact of changes within society and how these changes shape the way individuals and groups interact with religion. They further develop research skills for conducting an inquiry, processing information, and communicating findings about the interplay between religion and life.

Unit content

This unit includes the knowledge, understandings and skills described below. This is the examinable content.

The nature of religion

The search for meaning

- how social factors impact on how people interact with religion

Religious belief and practice

- how one religious belief, teaching, ritual or practice developed over time

Religious structures and processes

- how a religion uses a particular structure and/or process to address important issues

The influence of religion

The place of religion in society

- differing ways in which religion is viewed in society

Religion in historical contexts

- the significance of one religious event and/or issue from the past

Current issues for religion

- the nature of one current issue generating tension and conflict in society
- how a religion responds to this tension and/or conflict and the reasons for this response

Religious inquiry and learning skills

Terms and concepts

- use terms and concepts in appropriate contexts to demonstrate relevant knowledge and understanding

Research

- frame questions to guide inquiry and develop a coherent research plan for inquiry
- identify, locate and organise relevant information from a range of relevant sources
- practise ethical scholarship when conducting research

Analysis and use of sources

- identify the origin, purpose and context of particular sources
- analyse, interpret and synthesise evidence from different types of sources to develop and sustain an academic argument
- evaluate the reliability, usefulness and contestable nature of sources to develop informed judgements that support an academic argument
- analyse and evaluate different interpretations and points of view

Explanation and communication

- develop reasoned and supported conclusions
- develop texts that integrate appropriate evidence from a range of sources to explain, support and/or refute arguments
- communicate understanding by selecting and using text forms appropriate to purpose and audience
- apply appropriate referencing techniques accurately and consistently

Unit 4

Unit description

The focus for this unit is the interplay between religion and life. Students explore how religion responds to, and interacts with, issues that arise within society. They further develop research skills for conducting an inquiry, processing information and communicating findings about the interplay between religion and life.

Unit content

This unit includes the knowledge, understandings and skills described below. This is the examinable content.

The nature of religion

The search for meaning

- the interplay between the life of one significant religious person, their context and religion

Religious belief and practice

- the concept of freedom from a religious perspective
- a religious belief, teaching, ritual or practice provided by a religion to help people in their search for freedom

Religious structures and processes

- how and why a religion develops and expresses its beliefs

The influence of religion

The place of religion in society

- the role religion plays in the public life of Australia or another nation

Religion in historical contexts

- the interplay between a religion and an issue within a particular historical context

Current issues for religion

- a current issue for a religion and how this religion interacts with this issue

Religious inquiry and learning skills

Terms and concepts

- use terms and concepts in appropriate contexts to demonstrate relevant knowledge and understanding

Research

- frame questions to guide inquiry and develop a coherent research plan for inquiry
- identify, locate and organise relevant information from a range of relevant sources
- practise ethical scholarship when conducting research

Analysis and use of sources

- identify the origin, purpose and context of particular sources
- analyse, interpret and synthesise evidence from different types of sources to develop and sustain an academic argument
- evaluate the reliability, usefulness and contestable nature of sources to develop informed judgements that support an academic argument
- analyse and evaluate different interpretations and points of view

Explanation and communication

- develop reasoned and supported conclusions
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- communicate understanding by selecting and using text forms appropriate to purpose and audience
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School-based assessment

The *Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) Manual* contains essential information on principles, policies and procedures for school-based assessment that needs to be read in conjunction with this syllabus.

Teachers design school-based assessment tasks to meet the needs of students. The table below provides details of the assessment types for the Religion and Life ATAR Year 12 syllabus and the weighting for each assessment type.

Assessment table – Year 12

Type of assessment	Weighting
Investigation Students use the religious inquiry and learning skills to plan, conduct and communicate the results of an inquiry. Research formats can include: written reports, oral presentations or multimedia presentations or a combination of these.	25%
Explanation The format for explanations can be: structured short written responses, extended writing, such as reports and essays, oral and/or multimedia presentations, including speeches, and/or seminar presentations.	20%
Source analysis Students respond to questions based on one or more sources. Sources can include: religious teachings and practices (extracts from stories, sacred texts and writings, oral traditions, speeches, symbols, artwork, rituals); newspapers (extracts from reportage, analysis, editorials, letters, opinion columns, cartoons); radio, television, video and film (news, current affairs, documentaries, dramas, comedy); and/or websites. The format for source analysis can include: structured short written responses and/or extended written answers.	25%
Examination Typically conducted at the end of each semester and/or unit and reflecting the examination design brief for this syllabus.	30%

Teachers are required to use the assessment table to develop an assessment outline for the pair of units.

The assessment outline must:

- include a set of assessment tasks
- include a general description of each task
- indicate the unit content to be assessed
- indicate a weighting for each task and each assessment type
- include the approximate timing of each task (for example, the week the task is conducted, or the issue and submission dates for an extended task).

In the assessment outline for the pair of units, each assessment type must be included at least once over the year/pair of units.

The set of assessment tasks must provide a representative sampling of the content for Unit 3 and Unit 4.

Assessment tasks not administered under test/controlled conditions require appropriate validation/authentication processes.

Grading

Schools report student achievement in terms of the following grades:

Grade	Interpretation
A	Excellent achievement
B	High achievement
C	Satisfactory achievement
D	Limited achievement
E	Very low achievement

The teacher prepares a ranked list and assigns the student a grade for the pair of units. The grade is based on the student's overall performance as judged by reference to a set of pre-determined standards. These standards are defined by grade descriptions and annotated work samples. The grade descriptions for the Religion and Life ATAR Year 12 syllabus are provided in Appendix 1. They can also be accessed, together with annotated work samples, through the Guide to Grades link on the course page of the Authority website at www.scsa.wa.edu.au.

To be assigned a grade, a student must have had the opportunity to complete the education program, including the assessment program (unless the school accepts that there are exceptional and justifiable circumstances).

Refer to the *WACE Manual* for further information about the use of a ranked list in the process of assigning grades.

ATAR course examination

All students enrolled in the Religion and Life ATAR Year 12 course are required to sit the ATAR course examination. The examination is based on a representative sampling of the content for Unit 3 and Unit 4. Details of the ATAR course examination are prescribed in the examination design brief on the following page.

Refer to the *WACE Manual* for further information.

Examination design brief – Year 12

Time allowed

Reading time before commencing work: ten minutes
Working time for paper: three hours

Permissible items

Standard items: pens (blue/black preferred), pencils (including coloured), sharpener, correction fluid/tape, eraser, ruler, highlighters
Special items: nil

Additional information

The examination accommodates candidates who have studied different religions. The candidate uses specific knowledge relevant to at least one religion.

Section	Supporting information
Section One Source analysis 40% of the total examination 3–5 questions Suggested working time: 80 minutes	Questions consist of parts which can range from short to more extended answers. Questions require the candidate to refer to source material, which can include: extracts from religious manuscripts, news media and/or journal articles. Materials can be in the form of text, images, graphs and/or cartoons.
Section Two Short answer 30% of the total examination 3–5 questions Suggested working time: 50 minutes	Questions can be in parts and can require the candidate to respond to quotations and/or propositions.
Section Three Essay 30% of the total examination One question from a choice of two Suggested working time: 50 minutes	Questions can require the candidate to respond to quotations and/or propositions.

Appendix 1 – Grade descriptions Year 12

A	Provides comprehensive explanations of course content and demonstrates an engagement with key religion and life course concepts.
	Develops and connects important ideas using appropriate course specific language, evidence, examples and/or quotations.
	Comprehensively and coherently addresses most components of set tasks.
	Extracts and effectively uses important, relevant detail found in source material to support and sustain meaningful responses.
	Structures research around key concepts and draws out the relationship between key ideas.
B	Provides detailed explanations of course ideas, events, issues and people; engages with more complex ideas and tasks.
	Recognises how important ideas connect and relate to each other; may assume rather than explain how these ideas connect.
	Responds in detail to set tasks, making use of important terms, evidence and examples.
	Identifies and uses relevant ideas found in source material to address the requirements of set tasks.
	Completes detailed, logical research and makes some valid connections between key ideas.
C	Provides explanations that include the use of relevant course ideas, events, issues and people.
	Makes simple connections between key ideas and issues.
	Recalls and uses relevant ideas and detail in set tasks but the distinction between what is relevant or important tends to be neglected.
	Recognises important details found in source material but struggles to show how these relate to course specific ideas or fully address the requirements of set tasks.
	Attempts research that includes relevant information and shows some level of organisation and thought, but tends to rely upon the use of familiar scaffolds for organising and directing work.
D	Provides explanations that use some relevant religious ideas.
	Misrepresents, oversimplifies or ignores how key ideas and issues relate to each other.
	Presents ideas and information that tends to be superficial or not address basic requirements in set tasks.
	Tends to identify incorrect or irrelevant detail found in source material.
	Incorporates the use of some detail in research without necessarily processing the relevance of what has been gathered or adequately using information to address the purpose of an investigation.
E	Does not meet the requirements of a D grade and/or has completed insufficient assessment tasks to be assigned a higher grade.

