



# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## COURSE FRAMEWORK

### INTRODUCTION

This Course Framework provides the essential basis for the development and accreditation of senior secondary courses in Religious Studies and provides a common basis for the assessment, moderation and reporting of student outcomes in courses based on the Framework.

The Religious Studies Framework has been informed by the Statement on Studies of Society and Environment for Australian Schools and the ACT Curriculum Framework on Studies of Society and Environment.

Courses developed under this framework may comprise standard units or 0.5 standard units.

### RATIONALE

Religious Studies involves learning about the phenomenon of religion and religious experiences in general and the expression of it within specific religious and spiritual traditions.

The study of religion is intended to help students recognise, understand and appreciate that the human view of reality includes a spiritual dimension. Studying the beliefs and practices of different traditions facilitates understanding of the role that religious/spiritual experience (including an awareness of the transcendent dimension of human experience) has had and continues to have within overall human experience.

Religious Studies offers the opportunity to explore the search for meaning through a study of religious and spiritual experience across cultures. Studying how adherents of different traditions apply their beliefs and experience to ethical, moral and social justice issues can enhance cross-cultural understanding and promote mutual enrichment. The understanding of alternative ways of viewing reality can facilitate cross-cultural harmony in contemporary Australian society, and enable fuller participation in that multicultural society.

Religious Studies develops skills and understanding to help students in their personal search for meaning and formulation of their own understanding of ethical and social justice issues. It helps students to think critically about values in contemporary societies and to develop personal ethical standards. Thus they may come to see the link between their well being and the well being of other members of society.

## GOALS

Course Framework Goals focus on the essential things that students should know and be able to do as a result of studying any course in this subject area. They are statements of intended student outcomes.

All courses based on this Course Framework should enable students to:

- Understand and recognise the nature of religious and spiritual experiences;
- identify significant dimensions of religious expression by examining different religious traditions, including historical and socio/cultural features;
- interpret the expression of religion in contemporary society and the way belief systems and religious traditions affect their own and other people's behaviour;
- critically appraise their own values with regard to values inherent in religious traditions, underlying philosophies and ethics in contemporary society;
- communicate effectively the results of appropriate enquiry and use the terminology of religious studies in analysing religious phenomena.

## GUIDE TO THE SELECTION OF CONTENT

Courses developed under this Framework will provide details of course content through the component units of the course. While this content will differ according to the particular course classification (A, T), all content will be chosen to enable students to work towards the achievement of the goals of the Framework.

All courses will be based on the essential concepts and processes outlined below:

### Essential Concepts and Processes

The essential **concepts** within religious studies are:

The nature of religion and religious tradition;

Spirituality;

The ways in which people search for and find meaning;

The ways in which people, beliefs and society interact and enrich each other;

Ethics and social justice.

The essential **processes** that underlie Religious Studies are:

- Investigation  
(location, selection and interpretation of information from various sources)
- Critical reflection  
(analysis and evaluation of information, sacred texts, religious ideas and ethical issues)
- Participation  
(engaging and responding, both individually and collaboratively, with the key concepts of the course)

- Communication  
(presenting knowledge and ideas in a variety of forms appropriate to different audiences)

These processes are broadly those of Studies of Society and Environment, focussed specifically on Religious Studies.

### **Additional advice on content selection**

Course developers are encouraged to be innovative and broad in their selection of **content**, while maintaining an awareness of:

- the influence of the Judaeo-Christian tradition;
- the history and the influence of other religious traditions including indigenous spirituality;
- the interaction of the secular and religious aspects of society with reference to philosophical bases.

## **VOCATIONAL COURSES**

There are no vocational programs under this Course Framework.

## **KEY COMPETENCIES**

A number of work related competencies have been accepted at national level as being important for all young Australians.

These are:

- Collecting and analysing information (KC1)
- Communicating ideas and information (KC2)
- Planning and organising activities (KC3)
- Working with others and in teams (KC4)
- Using mathematical ideas and techniques (KC5)
- Solving problems (KC6)
- Using technology (KC7)

Teachers are encouraged to incorporate these competencies into their courses.

## ACROSS CURRICULUM PERSPECTIVES

Nine Across Curriculum Perspectives have been identified by the Department of Education, Youth and Family Services as important societal and educational issues which cross curriculum boundaries. The Board has adopted these perspectives for inclusion, where possible, in courses of study at senior secondary level.

### The Across Curriculum Perspectives are:

- Aboriginal Education and Torres Strait Islander Education
- Australian Education
- Environment Education
- Gender Equity
- Information Access
- Language for Understanding
- Multicultural Education
- Special Needs Education
- Work Education

Teachers are referred to the documents listed in the bibliography, which identify the Across Curriculum Perspectives and provide advice on how to include them in all courses.

## PEDAGOGY

### Learning Principles

The following *Learning Principles* have been developed by the BSSS Secretariat to support ACT senior secondary curriculum.

Learning is a complex process of constructing and applying knowledge and of developing and applying skills. This set of learning principles is premised on the belief that learning is a partnership between students and teachers, that all students are able to learn and that teachers are responsible for advancing student learning.

1. Learning builds on existing knowledge, understandings and skills.  
(*Prior knowledge*)
2. When learning is organised around major concepts, principles and significant real world issues, within and across disciplines, it helps students make connections and build knowledge structures.  
(*Deep knowledge and connectedness*)
3. Learning is facilitated when students actively monitor their own learning and consciously develop ways of organising and applying knowledge within and across contexts.  
(*Metacognition*)

4. Learners' sense of self and motivation to learn affect learning.  
(*Self-concept*)
5. Learning needs to take place in a context of high expectations.  
(*High expectations*)
6. Learners learn in different ways and at different rates.  
(*Individual differences*)
7. Different cultural environments, including the use of language, shape learners' understandings and the way they learn.  
(*Socio-cultural effects*)
8. Learning is a social and collaborative function as well as an individual one.  
(*Collaborative learning*)
9. Learning is strengthened when learning outcomes and criteria for judging learning are made explicit and when students receive frequent feedback on their progress.  
(*Explicit expectations and feedback*).

In developing Teaching and Learning Strategies, course developers should also take into account:

The need to relate beliefs to day to day experience of the followers of specific religious traditions (for example, guest speakers, visits to places of worship, sacred sites);

The need to engage students through experiential learning, (for example youth ministry, presentations, excursions, camps and communal rites);

The necessity of valuing the uniqueness and richness of different religious traditions;

The relevance of different approaches to the teaching of religion and value structures, such as:

shared praxis (Thomas Groome),  
[www.ceo.parra.catholic.edu.au/reintroreparra/scp.htm](http://www.ceo.parra.catholic.edu.au/reintroreparra/scp.htm)  
[www.ncric.com/praxis.html](http://www.ncric.com/praxis.html)

the Five Strands approach (Peter Vardy)  
[www.dialogueaustralia.com.au](http://www.dialogueaustralia.com.au)  
[www.dialogue.ed.org](http://www.dialogue.ed.org)  
or the Integrated Model (Lovat).

## ASSESSMENT

Assessment tasks elicit responses that demonstrate the degree to which students have achieved the goals of the unit and the course. Assessment tasks (grouped into Task Types) use the general assessment criteria in the Course Framework in order to provide a common basis for moderation across colleges. The following are examples which may be used.

### Assessment Task Types

Task types	Type 1 Test	Type 2 Extended writing	Type 3 Oral Communication/ Creative work
	Unit test Topic test Document Study	Research Assignment Essay Report Biography Identification activity	Oral presentation Debates Seminar Role play Monologue Dialogue Interview Models Music/song Poetry Role play Art folio Games Websites Diary Maps
Weighting in A courses	20-35%	20-35%	30-60%
Weighting in T courses	30-40%	30-40%	20-40%
Weighting in a 0.5 courses	25-35%	25-35%	30-50%

## **Please Note**

Standard units (1.0):

- Are required to have from four (4) to six (6) assessment tasks.
- All units must contain at least one assessment task from Task Types 1, 2, and 3.
- It is strongly recommended that all units have an oral communication assessment task (from Task Type 3).
- The weighting on oral communication tasks in T courses should be no more than 25% and in A courses no more than 40%.
- It would be expected that oral communication tasks would contain a significant element of research accompanied by a written summary.
- Course writers are encouraged to develop assessment tasks that involve collaborative learning.

Half standard unit (0.5 Units):

- Are required to have three (3) assessment tasks.
- All units must contain at one assessment task from Task Types 1, 2, and 3.
- It is strongly recommended that all units have an oral communication assessment task (from Task Type 3).
- It would be expected that oral communication tasks would contain a significant element of research accompanied by a written summary.
- Course writers are encouraged to develop assessment tasks that involve collaborative learning.

## **Assessment Criteria**

The following criteria for assessment and reporting of student achievement are a focus for assessment and reporting in all courses based on this Course Framework. Criteria are the dimensions of quality that teachers look for in evaluating student work. Over a course of study, these criteria must be used by teachers to assess student performance, but not all criteria need to be used on each task. Assessment criteria are to be used holistically on a given task and in determining the unit grade.

The following criteria are the basis for assessment and reporting in all courses based on this Course Framework.

Students will be assessed on the degree to which they demonstrate:

- Understanding of the fundamental characteristics of religious experience and expression;
- Knowledge of religious traditions and how different traditions relate to each other;
- Critical appraisal of values and their application to contemporary issues;
- Effective inquiry skills using a variety of resources and technologies;
- Effective communication using a range of modes in a variety of situations.

## **MODERATION**

Moderation is a system designed and implemented to:

Provide comparability in the system of school-based assessment;

Form the basis for valid and reliable assessment in senior secondary schools;

Involve the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies and colleges in cooperation and partnership; and

Maintain the quality of school-based assessment and the credibility, validity and acceptability of Board certificates.

Moderation commences within individual colleges. Teachers develop assessment programs and instruments, apply assessment criteria, and allocate Unit Grades, according to the relevant Course Framework. Teachers within course teaching groups conduct consensus discussions to moderate marking or grading of individual assessment instruments and unit grade decisions.

## **THE MODERATION MODEL**

Moderation within the ACT encompasses structured, consensus-based peer review of Unit Grades for all accredited courses, as well as statistical moderation of course scores, including small group procedures, for T courses.

### **Moderation by Structured, Consensus-based Peer Review**

Review is a subcategory of moderation, comprising the review of standards and the validation of Unit Grades. In the review process, Unit Grades, determined for Year 11 and Year 12 student assessment portfolios that have been assessed in schools by teachers under accredited courses, are moderated by peer review against system wide criteria and standards. This is done by matching student performance with the criteria and standards outlined in the unit grade descriptors as stated in the Course Framework. Advice is then given to colleges to assist teachers with, and/or reassure them on, their judgments.

### **Preparation for Structured, Consensus-based Peer Review**

Towards the end of each year, for each A and T course offered by the school, the Semester 2 assessment portfolios of a sample of Year 11 students which, after the ordinary application of criteria, is each typical of a given Unit Grade, is sent to the ACTBSSS Secretariat. This material is considered at the first moderation day in March of the following year.

Towards the end of semester 1 each year, the same requirement applies for the Semester 1 assessment portfolios of a sample of Year 12 students. This material is considered at the second moderation day in August of the same year.

### **The College Course Presentation**

The package of materials (College Course Presentation) presented by a college for review on moderation days in each course area will comprise the following:

- A folder containing supporting documentation as requested by the Board Secretariat through memoranda to colleges.
- a set of student portfolios containing marked and/or graded written and non-written assessment responses and completed criteria and standards feedback forms. Evidence of all assessment responses on which the unit grade decision has been made is to be included in the student review portfolios. Specific requirements for subject areas and types of evidence to be presented for each moderation day will be outlined by the Board Secretariat through memoranda and Information Papers.

## **UNIT GRADES**

Grade descriptors provide a guide for teacher judgement of students' achievement, based on the assessment criteria, over a unit of work in this subject. Grades are organised on an A-E basis and represent standards of achievement demonstrated by students. Grades are awarded on the proviso that the assessment requirements have been met.

The following descriptors are consistent with the system grade descriptors, which describe generic standards of student achievement across all courses.

## Achievement Standards For A Courses

Grade	Descriptor
A student who achieves the grade <b>A</b> typically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates strong inquiry and reference skills.</li> <li>• Makes apt and thoughtful application of key religious concepts and information from appropriate sources.</li> <li>• Argues a strong case supported by appropriate evidence.</li> <li>• Is coherent and convincing in verbal and non-verbal communication.</li> <li>• Produces excellent results by working collaboratively and/or independently.</li> <li>• Shows empathy in appraising values.</li> </ul>
A student who achieves the grade <b>B</b> typically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates good inquiry and reference skills.</li> <li>• Constructs and supports a simple argument using appropriate sources.</li> <li>• Understands, analyses and applies key religious concepts and information.</li> <li>• Works well, collaboratively and/or independently.</li> <li>• Communicates main ideas, verbally and non-verbally in a logical and confident manner.</li> </ul>
A student who achieves the grade <b>C</b> typically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands and applies some key religious concepts and information.</li> <li>• Recalls and shares information from appropriate sources.</li> <li>• Works collaboratively and/or independently.</li> <li>• Effectively communicates main ideas, verbally and non-verbally.</li> <li>• Demonstrates reasonable inquiry and referencing skills.</li> </ul>
A student who achieves the grade <b>D</b> typically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Displays limited understanding of the key concepts, religious terminology and research techniques.</li> <li>• Under guidance works collaboratively.</li> <li>• Transcribes and reports given information in simple and non-verbal forms.</li> </ul>
A student who achieves the grade <b>E</b> typically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows interest in personally relevant concepts.</li> <li>• Records and repeats given information, using a limited range of communication skills.</li> <li>• Works under close supervision.</li> </ul>

## Achievement Standards for T courses

Grade	Descriptor
A student who achieves the grade <b>A</b> typically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates highly perceptive and reflective understanding of the key concepts and issues of the unit.</li> <li>• Displays insight, empathy and innovation in applying appropriate knowledge.</li> <li>• Demonstrates a very high level of discrimination in research and critical analysis.</li> <li>• Critically appraises issues and values by advancing and sustaining a complex argument.</li> <li>• Works collaboratively and/or independently with confidence and initiative at a very high level.</li> <li>• Communicates verbally and non-verbally in an appropriate, sophisticated and coherent manner.</li> <li>• Displays strong original thought and imagination.</li> <li>• Demonstrates strong inquiry and reference skills.</li> </ul>
A student who achieves the grade <b>B</b> typically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates perceptive and reflective analysis and understanding of the key concepts and issues of the unit.</li> <li>• Argues a strong case and is innovative in applying knowledge and appraising values.</li> <li>• Researches widely with discernment and accuracy.</li> <li>• Works collaboratively and/or independently.</li> <li>• Communicates verbally and non-verbally using a variety of media, in a logical and confident manner.</li> <li>• Demonstrates good inquiry and reference skills.</li> </ul>
A student who achieves the grade <b>C</b> typically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applies comprehension of key concepts to the issues of the unit.</li> <li>• Demonstrates some insight in applying knowledge.</li> <li>• Selects appropriate information from familiar sources.</li> <li>• Constructs sound argument in addressing key concepts and in appraising values.</li> <li>• Works collaboratively and/or independently.</li> <li>• Effectively communicates main ideas, verbally and non-verbally.</li> <li>• Demonstrates reasonable inquiry and referencing skills.</li> </ul>

A student who achieves the grade <b>D</b> typically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates limited analysis and understanding of the key concepts in the unit.</li> <li>• Limits research to simple familiar sources.</li> <li>• Constructs a simple argument.</li> <li>• Works collaboratively and/or independently with guidance.</li> <li>• Communicates verbally and non-verbally in a simple manner.</li> <li>• Demonstrates basic inquiry and referencing skills.</li> </ul>
A student who achieves the grade <b>E</b> typically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands simple concepts where they are personally relevant and topical.</li> <li>• Undertakes limited research.</li> <li>• Completes straightforward and simple tasks with guidance.</li> <li>• Has limited control of verbal and non-verbal communication.</li> <li>• Little evidence of inquiry or referencing skills.</li> </ul>

## **ASSESSMENT RUBRICS**

These are currently under development.

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The following list is not intended to be exhaustive. It represents a compilation of established teacher references for courses in Religious Studies

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- Buddhist Scriptures
- The Upanishads
- The Bhagavad Gita
- New Revised Standard Version Bible
- New Jerusalem Bible
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## **Religions (including Comparative studies of)**

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## **Religious History**

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## **Resources are available from:**

The National Library.

St. Mark's Library, Barton.

A.C.U. Signadou Campus.

Australian National University.

University of Canberra.

Catholic Education Office Resource Centre and Bookshop, Manuka.

O'Connell Education Centre, Griffith.

Videos, in particular, can be useful in giving students some experience of other religions and traditions.

## **2003 COURSE FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT GROUP**

<b>Name</b>	<b>College</b>
Helen Crain-Welsby	St Clare's College
Carol McKenny	BSSS
Mark Pickham	MacKillop Catholic College
Veronica Poole	Daramalan College
Judith Wood	BSSS

## ASSESSMENT CRITERIA/GOAL MATRIX

#	Assessment Criteria	Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3	Goal 4	Goal 5
1	Understanding of the fundamental characteristics of religious experience and expression	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Knowledge of religious traditions and how different traditions relate to each other	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
3	Critical appraisal of values and their application to contemporary issues	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓
4	Effective inquiry skills using a variety of resources and technologies	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
5	Effective communication using oral, written and mixed media modes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓✓

- ✓✓✓ Essential for connection between assessment criteria and goal
- ✓✓ A strong connection between assessment criteria and the goal
- ✓ A general connection between the criteria and goal