

SPECIFICATION FOR THE NEW JUNIOR CERTIFICATE RELIGION COURSE

Title of short course – Religion

Introduction – Junior Cycle education places students at the centre of the educational experience, enabling them to actively participate in their communities and in society and to be resourceful and confident learners in all aspects and stages of their lives. Junior cycle is inclusive of all students and contributes to equality of opportunity, participation and outcome for all.

The Junior Cycle allows students to make a greater connection with learning by focusing on the quality of learning that takes place and by offering experiences that are engaging and enjoyable for them, and relevant to their lives. These experiences are of a high quality, contribute directly to the physical, mental and social wellbeing of learners, and where possible, provide opportunities for them to develop their abilities and talents in the areas of creativity, innovation and enterprise. The learner's Junior Cycle Programme builds on their learning to date, actively supports their progress in learning and in addition, supports them in developing the learning skills that will assist them in meeting the challenges of life beyond the school.

Rationale - Central to teaching Religion is the idea that students should be exposed to diverse and sometimes competing ideas about life's big questions. Learning about the World's Major Religions and the Non-religious interpretation of life is a central part of this and should be covered in 1st Year as a basis for all discussion. As a consequence discussion, deliberation and debate are important learning methodologies. The teacher and students will work together to tease out questions and problems. Examples of questions might be: 'What do people believe?' 'Is killing ever justified?' 'What is my purpose in life?'

Religion enables the students to have understanding, tolerance and respect for other people, their beliefs and practices or worldviews. It enables students to discuss moral decision-making and celebrates diversity and is an outlet for projects of social compassion.

Religion seeks to promote an understanding and appreciation of why people believe, as well as tolerance and respect for the values and beliefs of all. The syllabus centres on a framework of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes

The specification for Religion invites the students to reflect on their own experiences. The students' own experience of religion and their commitment to a particular religious tradition, and/or to a continuing search for meaning, will therefore be encouraged and supported.

Aims of Junior Cycle Religion

To provide students with a framework for encountering and engaging with the variety of religious traditions in Ireland and elsewhere.

To foster an awareness that the human search for meaning is common to all peoples, of all ages and at all times.

To explore how this search for meaning has often found, and often continues to find, expression in religion.

To identify how understandings of God and religious traditions have contributed to the culture in which we live and how historical and religious events have influenced the world today.

To identify how understandings of God and religious traditions have often and often continue to have an impact on lifestyle and relationships – personal, interpersonal and relationships within communities.

To appreciate the richness of religious traditions and to acknowledge that meaning can also be expressed through the non-religious interpretation of life.

To support the diverse interpretations of life in school and to explore the historical founding, ethos and spiritual life of the school.

To provide an opportunity for students to self-reflect in order to promote wellbeing, good mental health and inclusion.

To develop respect for the opinions and beliefs of others.

STATEMENTS OF LEARNING

Statements	Examples of related learning in the course
SOL 6: The student appreciates and respects how diverse values, beliefs and traditions have contributed to the communities and culture in which she/he lives.	Appreciating and respecting diverse values and beliefs is central to this course. Students use their enquiry and research skills when figuring out how diverse values, beliefs and traditions have contributed to the communities and cultures of today's world and societies.
SOL 5: The student has an awareness of personal values and an understanding of the process of moral.	Students reflect upon and describe their own personal values in an environment of inclusion and develop an understanding of the process of moral decision making. They examine a range of questions from an ethical and religious perspective, to identify their own values and think critically about how they arrive at decisions based on those values and on clear, logical and rigorous thinking.
SOL 7: The student values what it means to be an active citizen, with rights and responsibilities in local and wider contexts.	Students either individually or as part of a team, research and discuss what it means to be an active citizen, with rights and responsibilities in local and wider communities.
SOL 8: The student values local, national and international heritage, understands the importance of the relationship between past and current events and the forces that drive change.	Students examine key historical and religious events that drove change on a national and international level. Students engage in brainstorming and discussing the relationship between past and current events and the forces that cause change.
SOL 10: The student has an awareness, knowledge, skills, values and motivation to live sustainably.	Students explore the ethical implications of climate change and values and motivation to live sustainably.
SOL 11: The student takes action to safeguard and promote his/her wellbeing and that of others.	Promoting wellbeing, good mental health and inclusion is central to this course. Students are given the opportunity to reflect on the spiritual aspect of life.

Religion - Key Skills.

In addition to their specific content and knowledge, the subjects and short courses of the Junior Cycle provide students with opportunities to develop a range of key skills. The Junior Cycle Curriculum focuses on eight key skills.



This course offers opportunities to support all key skills, but some are particularly significant. The examples below identify some for the elements that are related to learning

activities in Religion. Teachers can also build many of the other elements of particular key skills into their classroom planning.

Key Skill	Key Skill Element	Student Learning Activity
Being creative.	Exploring options and alternatives	Students will seek out different beliefs, viewpoints and perspectives about life, learning about the various beliefs of different religions.
Being literate	Expressing ideas clearly and accurately.	Students will learn to examine both oral and written communication and how to read different styles of text such as the Bible and the Qu'ran.
Being numerate	Being able to look at graphs showing growth figures,	Students will examine numbers of followers and timelines of people involved in Religion.
Communicating, Discussing and debating	Class discussion and debates	Students gain confidence as they participate in these activities
Managing information and thinking.	Gathering, recording, organising and evaluating information and data	Students gather and evaluate ideas from a range of sources and learn how to use data to support their research. They are encouraged to reflect on their understanding and review it in light of new ideas encountered.
Managing myself. Knowing myself.	Participation in classroom activities, including debates and discussions	Students gain confidence and come to recognise their personal strengths.
Staying well, Being positive about learning	Reflection through organised retreats, trips or time in the Meditation Room.	Central to this course are the students' own questions and capacity to deliberate. Religion amplifies student's voice and the ability to discover meaning for themselves. A climate of respect and generous listening is developed

		through the positive classroom practice and inclusive outlook of this course.
Working with others.	Cultural literacy and respecting differences.	This course encourages students to consider different points of view and to appreciate diversity as a source of enriched learning.

The thrust of the Short Course in Religion is to gain deeper understanding and clarity through thoughtful and collaborative dialogue. The skills needed for participation in a community of enquiry need to be taught; the importance of listening to the contribution of others (learning from their ideas, and viewpoints), how to critique arguments and respond to arguments constructively, how to manage personal feelings and impulsivity, etc. Everyone takes it in turn to research facts, provide examples, express opinions, put forth arguments, and provide counter-arguments. The aim is to develop deeper understanding of and clarity about the religion, not showmanship or winning the debate. Developing skills in this way signals an active, shared pursuit of knowledge.

Learning to respect viewpoints which may not be their own is a key outcome for this course

OVERVIEW:

STRAND ONE – Foundations of World Religions

Islam - Founder's story – Muhammad, Beliefs and practices of a Muslim, Sacred Writings – Qu'ran, The place of worship – Mosque

Christianity - Founder's story – Jesus, Beliefs and practices of a Christian, Sacred Writings – Bible, Place of worship – Church

Judaism- Founder's story – Abraham, Beliefs and practices of a Jew, Sacred Writings – Tenakh, Place of Worship – Synagogue

Buddhism -Founder's Story – Buddha, Beliefs and practices of a Buddhist, Sacred Writings – The Pali Canon and Tripitaka, Place of Worship – Temple

Hinduism - Founding story – Rishis, sages and saints, Beliefs and practices of a Hindu, Sacred Writings – Vedas, Place of Worship – Temple

Other World Views – Atheism, Agnosticism, Secularism, Humanism

Special events, Outings, World Religion Festival & Guest Speakers during the year.

STRAND TWO – Expressions of Faith and Religion.

Pilgrimage – Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism

Festivals - Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism

Rites of Passage - Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism

Symbols - Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism

People associated with Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism

Special features of Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism

Special events, Outings, World Religion Festival & Guest Speakers during the year.

STRAND THREE – Morality and Social Justice.

Morality - sources of morality, actions and consequences, making moral decisions, morality and the law,

Prayer – Prayer, Meditation, reasons, different traditions, Icons,

Communities of Faith – Community, Characteristics, Sectarianism, Ecumenism,

Social Compassion Projects – Homelessness, Trocaire, Christian Aid, Tiglin,

Mission – examples of people engaged in helping others,

Special events, Outings and Guest Speakers during the year

Strands and learning outcomes

Strand 1: Foundations of World Religions

Students learn about:

Students should be able to be able to:

1.1 What are faith and religion?	Present their ideas about what religion is. Give examples of religious experiences with which they have interacted. Identify questions in life that are common to humankind. Identify what their own “big questions” are. Understand that there are non-religious answers as well as religious answers to these big questions.
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1.2 Islam	Describe the context in which Islam began Tell the founding story of Islam Describe the beliefs and practices of followers of Islam. Describe the Sacred Texts and Holy Places of Islam.
1.3 Judaism	Describe the context in which Judaism began Tell the founding story of Judaism. Describe the beliefs and practices of followers of Judaism. Describe the Sacred Texts and Holy Places of Judaism.
1.4 Christianity	Describe the context in which Christianity began. Tell the founding story of Christianity. Describe the beliefs and practices of followers of Christianity. Describe the Sacred Texts and Holy Places of Christianity.
1.5 Hinduism	Describe the context in which Hinduism began. Tell the founding story of Hinduism. Describe the beliefs and practices of followers of Hinduism. Describe the Sacred Texts and Holy Places of Hinduism.
1.6 Buddhism	Describe the context in which Buddhism began. Tell the founding story of Buddhism. Describe the beliefs and practices of followers of Buddhism. Describe the Sacred Texts and Holy Places of Buddhism.
1.7 Developing skills of enquiry and tools of reflection.	Listen carefully, critically and respectfully to other points of view. Seek out different ideas to reach an informed perspective on religious belief. Reflect on the ideas of different perspectives and what faith could mean to them. Take part in one exercise of reflection eg meditation room, trip to a place of worship, guest speaker and group discussion.

Strand 2: How Faith is celebrated in our World.

Students learn about:

Students should be able to:

2.1 Pilgrimage and times of reflection.	Explore the idea of the need for reflection in life Give examples of religious pilgrimages for each of the 5 major world religions Understand how particular places came to be significant. Identify how they could grapple with their own “big questions”.
2.2. Religious Festivals	Explain why people celebrate particular times in the year. Explore the purpose of religious seasons and why certain times are significant to some people.

	<p>Give examples of religious festivals for each of the 5 major World Religions.</p> <p>Identify and reflect on times of importance for themselves.</p>
2.3 Significant times in life.	<p>Explain why people mark significant times in life such as birth and death.</p> <p>Reflect on the purpose of rites of passage.</p> <p>Give examples of rites of passage in each of the 5 major World Religions.</p> <p>Identify and reflect on how they mark significant times in their own lives.</p>
2.4 Symbols.	<p>Think about why we use symbols.</p> <p>Give examples of symbols used in each of the 5 major World Religions.</p> <p>Meaning , power and ascetic of religious symbols and iconography</p>
2.5 People of Faith.	<p>Reflect critically on what values and characteristics we celebrate in society today.</p> <p>Think about what values and characteristics are found in spiritual moral leaders.</p> <p>Give examples of People of Faith in each of the 5 major World religions.</p> <p>Reflect on what values they hold themselves and what they would like to achieve in life.</p>

Strand 3 – Morality and Faith in Action

Students learn about:

Students should be able to:

3.1 Morality	Identify what morality means and the difference issues involved in morality.
3.2 Prayer	Identify different types of prayer and meditation, reasons why people pray and how people pray in different world religions. Understand how Icons are made and their use in worship.
3.3 Communities of Faith	Identify what it means to be part of a community, characteristics of communities and different communities of faith. Understand sectarianism and ecumenism.
3.4 Social Compassion Project	Identify social compassion projects working in the community - Homelessness, Trocaire, Christian Aid and Tiglin and other projects with which Newpark has an association. Identify a possible social compassion project that students could engage with. Research the possibilities for help and the arrangements that would need to be made. Undertake the project.
3.5 Mission	Look at examples of people engaged in mission – helping others, eg Andy’s Orphanage in Malawi.

Assessment and reporting:

The Religion Course will be very much activity based with formative and summative assessments throughout the year. A wide range of activity and enquiry-focused teaching and learning strategies are appropriate in this new course.

Strand One – Students will be asked to complete a project on either Islam or Christianity for the Christmas Assessment or complete Islam and Christianity in their World Religions Scrapbook.

The Summer Assessment will ask students to produce a Three D Model related to any World Religion / World view. This assessment was piloted in May 2018 and May 2019 and students produced fabulous projects including Baked goods - Gingerbread Church, Chocolate Biscuit Cake Temple, wooden structures – churches and temples, crosses, cardboard structures – light tunnels and boxes and many painted pictures and symbols, Prayer Flags, Wind chimes, Batik pictures, Hindu Mandalas, written projects and clay modelling.

Strand Two – Students will be asked to produce a mini project on a place of pilgrimage, a mini booklet on any religious festival, to make a religious symbol and their summer assessment will be to complete an oral presentation on “a person who inspired others” in front of their class. This was piloted for the first time in May 2019 and the oral presentations were brilliant and varied including Mother Teresa, Michelle Obama, Martin Luther King, Malala Yousafzai, Bethany Hamilton. Students used power points, notes and photographs to aid their presentations.

Strand Three - Classroom based assessment will include mini projects on People of Moral Vision, a morality survey, production of a Meditation or Icon, projects on people who are making a difference in the lives of others, social compassion project work and reflection on it. There is a CBA in the last term of 3rd Year.

World Religions Festival and Exhibition – Junior Cycle students will participate in a World Religions Festival and Exhibition that will be organised in January. This will involve displaying their work, baking suitable foods, manning stalls and answering questions from other students. All RE classes will visit the exhibition on a planned basis.

Inclusive Assessment- The religion department will seek to include all students in their assessment practices allowing students the opportunities to work as individuals, in pairs or in groups. Assessment will be varied allowing students to produce creative, oral, written or practical work.

CBA

Possible ideas and suggestions have included a Reflection Journal on the social compassion projects or a morality study. The new JC Course for the Department of Education suggests the Human Search for Meaning – where pupils explore artistic or architectural or archaeological evidence of ways people have engaged in search for meaning and purpose in life. The Newpark RE Dept may decide to use that as our CBA.

The CBA will be examined in line with the Features of Quality set out in the guidelines from the Department of Education for the Classroom-Based Assessment Task.

The CBA will be assessed according to the Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) process with a meeting for the teachers involved in that Year Group. Effective feedback will be given when the SLAR meeting has taken place and will be recorded in the school's reporting to parents and students.