



## Syllabus

# Cambridge O Level Religious Studies (Bible Knowledge) 2048

For examination in June and November 2021.



## **Changes to the syllabus for 2021**

The latest syllabus is version 1, published September 2018.

For 2021, the Paper 1 examination will be based on the Gospel of Matthew.

**You are strongly advised to read the whole syllabus before planning your teaching programme.**

Copyright © UCLES September 2018

Cambridge Assessment International Education is part of the Cambridge Assessment Group. Cambridge Assessment is the brand name of the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), which itself is a department of the University of Cambridge.

UCLES retains the copyright on all its publications. Registered centres are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use. However, we cannot give permission to centres to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within a centre.

---

## Contents

---

1. Introduction .....	2
1.1 Why choose Cambridge International?	
1.2 Why choose Cambridge O Level?	
1.3 Why choose Cambridge O Level Religious Studies (Bible Knowledge)?	
1.4 How can I find out more?	
2. Teacher support .....	5
2.1 Support materials	
2.2 Endorsed resources	
2.3 Training	
3. Syllabus content at a glance .....	6
4. Assessment at a glance .....	7
5. Syllabus aims and assessment objectives .....	8
5.1 Syllabus aims	
5.2 Assessment objectives	
5.3 Relationship between assessment objectives and components	
6. Syllabus content .....	9
6.1 Versions of the Bible	
6.2 Syllabus content	
7. Notes on teaching .....	13
8. Other information .....	14

---

## 1. Introduction

---

### 1.1 Why choose Cambridge International?

Cambridge Assessment International Education prepares school students for life, helping them develop an informed curiosity and a lasting passion for learning. We are part of the University of Cambridge.

Our Cambridge Pathway gives students a clear path for educational success from age 5 to 19. Schools can shape the curriculum around how they want students to learn – with a wide range of subjects and flexible ways to offer them. It helps students discover new abilities and a wider world, and gives them the skills they need for life, so they can achieve at school, university and work.

Our programmes and qualifications set the global standard for international education. They are created by subject experts, rooted in academic rigour and reflect the latest educational research. They provide a strong platform for students to progress from one stage to the next, and are well supported by teaching and learning resources.

Every year, nearly a million Cambridge learners from 10000 schools in 160 countries prepare for their future with the Cambridge Pathway.

#### Cambridge learners

Our mission is to provide educational benefit through provision of international programmes and qualifications for school education and to be the world leader in this field. Together with schools, we develop Cambridge learners who are:

- **confident** in working with information and ideas – their own and those of others
- **responsible** for themselves, responsive to and respectful of others
- **reflective** as learners, developing their ability to learn
- **innovative** and equipped for new and future challenges
- **engaged** intellectually and socially, ready to make a difference.

#### Recognition

Our expertise in curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment is the basis for the recognition of our programmes and qualifications around the world.

Cambridge O Level is internationally recognised by schools, universities and employers as equivalent in demand to Cambridge IGCSE™ (International General Certificate of Secondary Education). There are over 700 000 entries a year in nearly 70 countries. Learn more at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/recognition](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/recognition)

#### Support for teachers

A wide range of materials and resources is available to support teachers and learners in Cambridge schools. Resources suit a variety of teaching methods in different international contexts. Through subject discussion forums and training, teachers can access the expert advice they need for teaching our qualifications. More details can be found in Section 2 of this syllabus and at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/teachers](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/teachers)

## Support for exams officers

Exams officers can trust in reliable, efficient administration of exams entries and excellent personal support from our customer services. Learn more at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/examsofficers](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/examsofficers)

## Quality management

Cambridge International is committed to providing exceptional quality. In line with this commitment, our quality management system for the provision of international qualifications and education programmes for students aged 5 to 19 is independently certified as meeting the internationally recognised standard, ISO 9001:2015. Learn more at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/ISO9001](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/ISO9001)

## 1.2 Why choose Cambridge O Level?

Cambridge O Level is typically for 14 to 16 year olds and is an internationally recognised qualification. It has been designed especially for an international market and is sensitive to the needs of different countries. Cambridge O Level is designed for learners whose first language may not be English, and this is acknowledged throughout the examination process.

Our aim is to balance knowledge, understanding and skills in our programmes and qualifications to enable students to become effective learners and to provide a solid foundation for their continuing educational journey.

Through our professional development courses and our support materials for Cambridge O Levels, we provide the tools to enable teachers to prepare students to the best of their ability and work with us in the pursuit of excellence in education.

Cambridge O Levels are considered to be an excellent preparation for Cambridge International AS & A Levels, the Cambridge AICE (Advanced International Certificate of Education) Diploma, Cambridge Pre-U, and other education programmes, such as the US Advanced Placement program and the International Baccalaureate Diploma programme. Learn more about Cambridge O Levels at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/olevel](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/olevel)

## Guided learning hours

Cambridge O Level syllabuses are designed on the assumption that learners have about 130 guided learning hours per subject over the duration of the course, but this is for guidance only. The number of hours required to gain the qualification may vary according to local curricular practice and the students' prior experience of the subject.

## 1.3 Why choose Cambridge O Level Religious Studies (Bible Knowledge)?

Cambridge O Levels are established qualifications that keep pace with educational developments and trends. Cambridge O Level syllabuses place emphasis on broad and balanced study across a wide range of subject areas. The syllabuses are structured so that candidates attain both practical skills and theoretical knowledge.

Cambridge O Level Religious Studies (Bible Knowledge) is accepted by universities and employers as proof of knowledge and understanding.

The syllabus focuses on Christian origins. It encourages learners to take a thoughtful approach to the study of the portrayal of the life and teaching of Jesus; it also considers the portrayal of the birth and development of the early church.

Learners develop an enquiring and critical approach to the study of biblical texts and explore the religious, ethical and historical questions raised. The syllabus is open to candidates of any religion (or none), and both the New International Version and the Revised Standard Version of the Bible are used for quotations.

### Prior learning

Learners beginning this course are not expected to have studied Religious Studies (Bible Knowledge) previously.

### Progression

Cambridge O Levels are general qualifications that enable candidates to progress either directly to employment, or to proceed to further qualifications.

Candidates who are awarded grades A\* to C in Cambridge O Level Religious Studies (Bible Knowledge) are well prepared to follow courses leading to Cambridge International AS and A Level Divinity, or the equivalent.

## 1.4 How can I find out more?

### If you are already a Cambridge school

You can make entries for this qualification through your usual channels. If you have any questions, please contact us at [info@cambridgeinternational.org](mailto:info@cambridgeinternational.org)

### If you are not yet a Cambridge school

Learn about the benefits of becoming a Cambridge school at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/startcambridge](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/startcambridge)  
Email us at [info@cambridgeinternational.org](mailto:info@cambridgeinternational.org) to find out how your organisation can register to become a Cambridge school.

---

## 2. Teacher support

---

### 2.1 Support materials

You can go to our public website at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/olevel](https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/olevel) to download current and future syllabuses together with specimen papers or past question papers, examiner reports and grade threshold tables from one series.

For teachers at registered Cambridge schools a range of additional support materials for specific syllabuses is available online from the School Support Hub. Go to [www.cambridgeinternational.org/support](https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/support) (username and password required). If you do not have access, speak to the Teacher Support coordinator at your school.

### 2.2 Endorsed resources

We work with publishers who provide a range of resources for our syllabuses including print and digital materials. Resources endorsed by Cambridge International go through a detailed quality assurance process to make sure they provide a high level of support for teachers and learners.

We have resource lists which can be filtered to show all resources, or just those which are endorsed by Cambridge International. The resource lists include further suggestions for resources to support teaching. See [www.cambridgeinternational.org/i-want-to/resource-centre](https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/i-want-to/resource-centre) for further information.

### 2.3 Training

We offer a range of support activities for teachers to ensure they have the relevant knowledge and skills to deliver our qualifications. See [www.cambridgeinternational.org/events](https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/events) for further information.

---

### 3. Syllabus content at a glance

---

All candidates study the following:

#### **The Portrayal of the Life and Teaching of Jesus**

- Background to the Gospel
- Key events in Jesus' life
- Miracles
- Parables
- People connected to Jesus
- Teaching
- Conflict and opposition to Jesus
- Titles of Jesus

#### **The Portrayal of the Birth of the Early Church**

- Background to the Acts of the Apostles
- The specific work of the Holy Spirit
- The spread of the church through Peter
- The spread of the church through Philip
- The spread of the church through Paul
- Preaching and speeches
- The life of the church
- Persecution of the church

## 4. Assessment at a glance

For Cambridge O Level Religious Studies (Bible Knowledge), candidates take two components: Paper 1 and Paper 2.

Components	Weighting
<b>Paper 1 The Portrayal of the Life and Teaching of Jesus</b> <b>1 hour 30 minutes</b> Candidates answer any four questions from a choice of six. Each question will have three parts. 80 marks Externally assessed	50%
<b>Paper 2 The Portrayal of the Birth of the Early Church</b> <b>1 hour 30 minutes</b> Candidates answer any four questions from a choice of six. Each question will have three parts. 80 marks Externally assessed	50%

### Availability

This syllabus is examined in the June and November examination series.

This syllabus is available to private candidates.

All Cambridge schools are allocated to one of six administrative zones. Each zone has a specific timetable. From 2021 this syllabus is not available in all of these administrative zones. To find out about the availability visit the syllabus page at [www.cambridgeinternational.org/olevel](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/olevel)

Detailed timetables are available from [www.cambridgeinternational.org/timetables](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/timetables)

### Combining this with other syllabuses

Candidates can combine this syllabus in an examination series with any other Cambridge International syllabus, except:

- 0490 Cambridge IGCSE Religious Studies
- syllabuses with the same title at the same level.

Please note that Cambridge O Level, Cambridge IGCSE and Cambridge IGCSE (9–1) syllabuses are at the same level.

## 5. Syllabus aims and assessment objectives

### 5.1 Syllabus aims

Cambridge O Level Religious Studies (Bible Knowledge) aims to:

- develop candidates' knowledge of the life and teaching of Jesus, and the development of the early Christian church
- develop an enquiring and critical approach to the study of biblical texts, the ideas they contain, and the ways in which they may be interpreted
- explore the religious, ethical and historical questions raised in the texts studied
- enable an informed response to issues arising out of their study
- develop a range of transferable skills and the attributes of the Cambridge learner.

### 5.2 Assessment objectives

The assessment objectives in Religious Studies (Bible Knowledge) are:

AO1: Describe and explain using knowledge and understanding

AO2: Use evidence and reasoned argument to express and evaluate personal responses, informed insights and differing viewpoints.

### 5.3 Relationship between assessment objectives and components

The approximate weightings allocated to each of the assessment objectives are summarised below.

Assessment objective	Paper 1	Paper 2	Weighting for qualification
AO1: Describe and explain using knowledge and understanding	30%	30%	<b>60%</b>
AO2: Use evidence and reasoned argument to express and evaluate personal responses, informed insights and differing viewpoints	20%	20%	<b>40%</b>

## 6. Syllabus content

### 6.1 Versions of the Bible

- Schools may use whichever version of the Bible they prefer. Please note that the majority of modern translations are based on a much more accurate version of the text than the King James Bible, also known as the Authorised Version (1611).
- Both the New International Version (NIV) and the Revised Standard Version (RSV) are used for quotations included in question papers.
- Questions set in the examinations can be answered from any version of the Bible.

### 6.2 Syllabus content

Paper 1: The Portrayal of the Life and Teaching of Jesus

**Please note that in 2021, Paper 1 will be based on Matthew's Gospel.**

Candidates will learn about the life and teaching of Jesus, as portrayed in Matthew's Gospel. Teachers must ensure that this content is understood in the context of the whole of the Gospel of Matthew.

The divisions of the subject content are not rigid and questions may be set which span two or more topics. The sequence in which the topics are listed is not intended to indicate either the order in which the topics should be studied or its relative importance.

Background to Matthew's Gospel

- the setting of the Gospel
  - the Roman occupation and government
  - the Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians
  - the idea of 'the Messiah'
- the traditional view of Matthew as author
  - arguments to support Matthew as author
  - arguments challenging Matthew as author
- possible reasons why Matthew's Gospel was written
  - possible purposes including Jewish Christians as readership
- the nature of Matthew's Gospel
  - idea of 'good news'
  - main characteristics (e.g. Old Testament fulfilment, and teaching about the church)

Key events in Jesus' life

- the events and what they reveal about the person, teaching and work of Jesus
- issues raised by the events
  - meaning (e.g. what is the meaning of Jesus' death?)
  - historical (e.g. are the accounts historically reliable or are they symbolic?)
  - significance (e.g. why was Bethlehem significant as a place of birth?)

## Miracles

- the miracles and what they reveal about the person, teaching and work of Jesus
- different types of miracles
  - healing miracles (e.g. the paralytic)
  - exorcisms (e.g. the dumb demoniac)
  - raising from the dead (e.g. the ruler's daughter)
  - nature miracles (e.g. stilling of the storm)
- issues raised by the accounts
  - purpose (e.g. why did Jesus perform miracles?)
  - historical (e.g. did the miracles happen as recorded?)

## Parables

- the parables and what they reveal about the person, teaching and work of Jesus
- issues raised by the accounts
  - purpose (e.g. why did Jesus teach using parables?)
  - meaning (e.g. how are they to be interpreted?)

## People connected to Jesus

- how different people were connected with the life of Jesus
- what these encounters reveal about the person, teaching and work of Jesus
  - the significance of these encounters (e.g. John the Baptist)

## Teaching

- Jesus' teaching
- issues raised by this teaching
  - applying this teaching to the twenty-first century (e.g. the Sabbath)

## Conflict and opposition to Jesus

- how and why there was opposition to Jesus
- issues raised by the accounts
  - could Jesus' death have been avoided?
  - Jesus' attitude towards this opposition

## Titles of Jesus

- the titles used of, and by, Jesus
- the meaning of the titles (e.g. Son of God)

## Paper 2: The Portrayal of the Birth of the Early Church

### **Please note Paper 2 will always be based on the Acts of the Apostles (Ch 1:1–21:15)**

Candidates will learn about the birth of the early church as portrayed in the Acts of the Apostles (Ch 1:1–21:15). Teachers must ensure that this content is understood in the context of the whole of the Acts of the Apostles.

The divisions of the subject content are not rigid and questions may be set which span two or more topics. The sequence in which the topics are listed is not intended to indicate either the order in which the topics should be studied or its relative importance.

#### Background to the Acts of the Apostles

- the traditional view of Luke as author
  - arguments to support Luke as author
  - connection between Luke’s Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles
- possible date for the writing of the Acts of the Apostles
  - argument for date before 64 CE
  - argument for date between 70 and 85 CE

#### The specific work of the Holy Spirit

- the events and what they reveal about the Holy Spirit
- comparison of occasions when people received the Holy Spirit
- the work of the Holy Spirit (e.g. how it changed people and affected events)
- the importance of the Holy Spirit (e.g. the church comes into being at Pentecost)

#### The spread of the church through Peter

- the role and work of Peter in the early church
- Peter’s importance and success
  - the spread of the church through Peter (e.g. healing at Lydda)
  - significance of Cornelius’ conversion

#### The spread of the church through Philip

- the role and work of Philip in the early church
- Philip’s importance and success
  - the spread of the church through Philip (e.g. the Ethiopian)

#### The spread of the church through Paul

- the role and work of Paul in the early church
- Paul’s importance and success
  - the spread of the church through Paul (e.g. missionary journeys)
  - Paul’s strategies in his missionary work and in his preaching (e.g. his speech at Athens)
  - Paul’s relationship with Barnabas (e.g. initially Barnabas was leader over Paul)

Preaching and speeches

- the content of the preaching of the early church
- the success of the preaching
  - the different responses (e.g. the Athenians)
- the content of the speeches of the early church
  - the different purposes (e.g. to the Ephesian elders at Miletus)

The life of the church

- the life of the early church
  - its organisation (e.g. apostles and elders)
  - its tensions (e.g. The Council of Jerusalem)
  - its development (e.g. the Gentile church)
- issues raised by the accounts
  - supernatural happenings (e.g. angels, visions, miracles and evil spirits)

Persecution of the church

- why the early church was persecuted
- the response to those persecutions

---

## 7. Notes on teaching

---

1. Please check which Gospel is being examined in the year in which you intend to make entries.
2. Candidates should be given the opportunity to discuss what they learn and to appreciate the views of others, even when these views differ from their own. In religious studies, tolerance of others and their views is fundamental. Candidates should look at the teaching of Jesus and how his teaching applied to his own time and to the time of the early church (particularly as it spread to the gentile world).
3. Candidates should study topics and relate material from different parts of the text. One suggestion is that, initially, candidates should read through the complete text of the Gospel of Matthew and Acts for an overview. Then a detailed and critical reading and study of the text should be made. Often, in studying a section of the text, reference to another passage is helpful.
4. Work should be planned so that candidates can review themes which are spread throughout the book – for example, Jesus' teaching on prayer, riches, forgiveness, etc. In the Acts of the Apostles, the whole of the set text needs to be reviewed to see how the church evolved, from grappling with the entry of the Gentiles into a Jewish-based community, to becoming independent from Judaism, to adapting its patterns of ministry and worship to meet the needs of Gentile converts.
5. A list of textbooks and resources is provided. No particular book is singled out. The books listed are those which should be available and have proved helpful in the past. Teachers will also find reputable concordances to be of value – for example, Cruden's Concordance.
6. The educational process is not intended solely for an examination. The examination is a natural outcome of a successful teaching process. Teachers should use a variety of educational practices and techniques to enable candidates to enjoy learning, to think and draw conclusions for themselves.
7. Candidates should be allowed to practise answering questions under timed, examination conditions and to discuss their work afterwards. A good technique is helpful in examinations but needs to be worked out and practised.

---

## 8. Other information

---

### Equality and inclusion

We have taken great care in the preparation of this syllabus and assessment materials to avoid bias of any kind. To comply with the UK Equality Act (2010), we have designed this qualification with the aim of avoiding direct and indirect discrimination.

The standard assessment arrangements may present unnecessary barriers for candidates with disabilities or learning difficulties. Arrangements can be put in place for these candidates to enable them to access the assessments and receive recognition of their attainment. Access arrangements will not be agreed if they give candidates an unfair advantage over others or if they compromise the standards being assessed.

Candidates who are unable to access the assessment of any component may be eligible to receive an award based on the parts of the assessment they have taken.

Information on access arrangements is in the *Cambridge Handbook* at  
[www.cambridgeinternational.org/examsofficers](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org/examsofficers)

### Language

This syllabus and the associated assessment materials are available in English only.

### Making entries

Exams officers are responsible for submitting entries to Cambridge International. We encourage them to work closely with you to make sure they enter the right number of candidates for the right combination of syllabus components. Entry option codes and instructions for submitting entries are in the *Cambridge Guide to Making Entries*. Your exams officer has a copy of this guide.

### Exam administration

To keep our exams secure, we produce question papers for different areas of the world, known as 'administrative zones'. We allocate all Cambridge schools to one administrative zone determined by their location. Each zone has a specific timetable. Some of our syllabuses offer candidates different assessment options. An entry option code is used to identify the components the candidate will take relevant to the administrative zone and the available assessment options.

### Retakes

Candidates can retake the whole qualification as many times as they want to. This is a linear qualification so candidates cannot re-sit individual components.

### Grading and reporting

Cambridge O Level results are shown by one of the grades A\*, A, B, C, D or E, indicating the standard achieved, A\* being the highest and E the lowest. 'Ungraded' indicates that the candidate's performance fell short of the standard required for grade E. 'Ungraded' will be reported on the statement of results but not on the certificate. The letters Q (result pending), X (no result) and Y (to be issued) may also appear on the statement of results but not on the certificate.

## How students and teachers can use the grades

Assessment at Cambridge O Level has two purposes:

- to measure learning and achievement

The assessment:

- confirms achievement and performance in relation to the knowledge, understanding and skills specified in the syllabus, to the levels described in the grade descriptions.

- to show likely future success

The outcomes:

- help predict which students are well prepared for a particular course or career and/or which students are more likely to be successful
- help students choose the most suitable course or career.

Cambridge Assessment International Education  
The Triangle Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge, CB2 8EA, United Kingdom  
Tel: +44 (0)1223 553554 Fax: +44 (0)1223 553558  
Email: [info@cambridgeinternational.org](mailto:info@cambridgeinternational.org) [www.cambridgeinternational.org](http://www.cambridgeinternational.org)