



Introducing
Religion &
Worldviews

Introducing Religion and Worldviews in Secondary Schools

Guidance for Trainers



Introduction

Welcome to the “Introducing Religion and Worldviews” training package for secondary school teachers. This package has been co-designed by 4 teachers and 3 university academics - supported by an advisory board - to help school leaders and teachers support colleagues as they seek to (further) adopt a Religion and Worldviews approach in the Religious Studies classroom¹.

The authors acknowledge that schools may use different names for their subject/department, such as Religious Education, Religious Studies, Religion Values and Ethics, Religion Ethics and Philosophy - to name but a few. However, for ease of reading, they will solely refer to Religious Studies (RS) in this training package.

You may need to explain to colleagues that in this training package, there are a series of videos in which the speakers are using the term ‘Religious Education’ instead of RS. This is because it is the term used by the Commission on Religious Education (CoRE) and in legislation, but that throughout this training we refer to RS as this is more commonly used from Key Stage 3 onwards.

Similarly, there can be different acronyms used to refer to the Religion and Worldviews approach, such as R&W, RW, RWV, or RWE (Religion and Worldviews Education). This training pack will use R&W, as was used by the teachers who co-designed these resources. Trainers are free to amend the text to use their preferred subject title, should they wish to do so.

The aims of this training package are:

- For teachers to have a better understanding of the R&W approach,
- For teachers to see where their curriculum already touches on and follows a R&W approach,

¹ This pack was co-designed by Dr Céline Benoit, Dr Tim Hutchings, Dr Rachael Shillitoe, Alisha Hussain, Attiyya Hussain, Vicki Donoghue, Toni Woodward.

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- To understand the benefits of adopting a R&W approach and how this can strengthen the teaching of religion and nonreligion in schools,
- For teachers to feel better equipped when dealing with challenges and/or resistance when implementing this change in the classroom.

This training package has been designed to be delivered in school – by teachers and for teachers. As such, it includes a number of suggested activities and videos, which have been created to help whoever is delivering the training support colleagues as they make sense of the R&W approach, and how this can inform their practice moving forward. Trainers are welcome to adapt some of the suggested activities, to better meet the needs of their audiences.

The suggested format for this training is as follows: /

- Session 1, entitled “**What is good RS and why do we need it**”, has been designed to support teachers who are new to RS, or who may not be RS specialists but have been assigned to teach RS in school.
- Session 2, entitled “**How ‘Religion and Worldviews’-ready are you?**”, has been designed to support all RS teachers, regardless of background, as they seek to (further) adopt a R&W approach in the RS classroom.
- Session 3, entitled “**How do you organise R&W in the classroom?**”, has also been designed for all RS teachers, regardless of background, as they reflect on the interplay between personal and organised worldviews, and how this will impact their practice.
- Session 4, entitled “**Supporting the implementation of a R&W approach in the classroom**”, has been designed for curriculum designers - i.e., those who will create the RS scheme of work for their school/department/Year Group. It may be useful for MAT leads for example, who need to support RS Heads/Leads across a number of schools.

Each session builds on a [series of videos](#), which have been created by 3 university academics. The videos were created in response to interviews with teachers, who explained where the gaps were when it came to R&W, and what conversations needed to happen to support a transition to a R&W approach in RS.

Each session is accompanied by a slide deck. Please note:

- The trainer's versions include detailed notes under each slide, to support you as you facilitate the training. **We recommend that trainers print each slide deck using the following settings: "print all slides" and select "notes pages" (instead of "full page slides").**
- The teachers' versions do not include any notes. We recommend that you share with colleagues the "teachers' slides", rather than those "including the notes for trainers" so that colleagues are not overwhelmed with the amount of information shared with them.

A teacher handout is also available, to give to colleagues, alongside a copy of the slides, and a summary infographic with useful links. If you print and hand out documents to colleagues, we recommend also providing a digital version of the summary infographic so that links can be accessed more easily.

The format of this training package is flexible: trainers are free to choose the sections that suit their needs best (e.g., you may want to do a one-day training based on sessions 1, 2 and 3 or 2, 3 and 4. Alternatively, you may choose to host a number of twilight sessions, focusing on a different theme and different audiences each time).

Prior to delivering the training, you might find it useful to conduct a short audit to understand where your teachers are at when it comes to Religion and Worldviews (R&W). Below are some questions you could put on an online form (such as Microsoft Forms) to capture attitudes:

1. How confident do you feel delivering RS classes in general? Scale 1-5 (1: not at all confident; 5: very confident)
2. How confident do you feel about adopting a Religion and Worldviews (R&W) approach in your RS classroom? Scale 1-5 (1: not at all confident; 5: very confident)
3. How confidently would you be able to explain to colleagues the challenge of defining "religion" and the implications of this challenge for teaching RS? Scale 1-5 (1: not at all confident; 5: very confident)

4. How confidently would you be able to explain to colleagues the problems with the World Religions approach? Scale 1-5 (1: not at all confident; 5: very confident)
5. How confidently would you be able to explain to colleagues the concept of worldview and why this may change the way you teach RS? Scale 1-5 (1: not at all confident; 5: very confident)
6. How confidently would you be able to explain what a personal worldview is? Scale 1-5 (1: not at all confident; 5: very confident)
7. How confidently would you be able to explain what an organised worldview is? Scale 1-5 (1: not at all confident; 5: very confident)

The same questions should be asked after the training has been delivered. This will enable you to capture the impact of the training, and whether there are areas where more work will be needed in the future.

Depending on your local context, you may find that your priority is to reassure teachers. Adopting a R&W approach is not about a complete rewrite of existing RS material! It is mostly about building on good practice, addressing possible gaps, and approaching topics differently. In many cases, it may be that simple tweaks are needed by adopting different activities or asking different questions to students.

If trainers are themselves new to the R&W approach, we recommend that they go through the training package individually, and watch all videos in their own time prior to delivering the training. The slide decks (which include detailed notes for the trainers under each slide, in the notes section) should provide sufficient background information to enable you to deliver this training. You might also find the video [Welcome to a Religion and Worldviews approach](#) useful.

Trainers may also find it helpful to visit the Religion and Worldviews FAQs, hosted on the Religious Education Council for England and Wales' website:

<https://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/resource/worldviews-introduction-faqs/>

It is worth noting that further courses exist, which trainers might find useful:

- Culham St Gabriel's Trust (CSTG) provides a [series of short courses](https://courses.cstg.org.uk/), including 'Introduction to a Religion & Worldviews approach', and 'Digging deeper into a Religion & Worldviews approach'. Short courses can be accessed here: <https://courses.cstg.org.uk/>
- The Open University has a [free course, entitled 'An Education in Religion and Worldviews'](#). This is a good resource to help build confidence prior to delivering the 'Introducing Religion and Worldviews' training if you are new to R&W.

Delivering the training

We recommend that trainers go over the slide decks, and read the detailed notes under each slide. The material can be adapted to suit the needs of your school(s). Below are recommendations put forward by secondary teachers.

Session 1: What is good RS, and why do we need it? (approx. 90 mins)

This session is aimed at teachers who are new to Religious Studies (RS), who are non-specialists in RS, or who are completely new to the Religion and Worldviews (R&W) approach.

If your group consists of RS specialists who have some understanding of R&W, you may want to make this section shorter or skip to Section 2 altogether.

The aims of Session 1 are to:

- Give teachers an opportunity to reflect on what RS is and why we need it in schools.
- Give teachers an opportunity to reflect on how they learnt about the concept of 'religion', and how that particular understanding may have shifted (e.g., moving from world religions being presented as neatly contained boxes, to acknowledging the fluidity within and between (non)religious traditions).
- Give teachers an opportunity reflect on some of the limitations of the concept of religion, not necessarily to teach these limits to pupils, but to become more mindful in the RS practice (e.g., this may result in a change in language used, such as moving away from statements such as "Guru Granth Sahib is similar to the Bible, but for Sikhs," which leads us to explore Sikhi through a Christian lens).
- Give teachers an opportunity to engage with the concept of worldview, and to explore how this can be a useful tool to acknowledge how we engage with religion and nonreligion in different ways throughout our life course.
- Give teachers an opportunity to reflect on the notion of worldview, not just as a set of complex ideas you have in your heads, but also as how we respond to the world (i.e., emotions, feelings, body...), and how this can be reflected in the RS classroom.

See PowerPoint slides (and notes) for Session 1. Further resources are signposted in the notes, and include:

- CoRE Report: <https://religioueducationcouncil.org.uk/rec/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Final-Report-of-the-Commission-on-RE.pdf>
- Nobody Stands Nowhere video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AFRxKF-Jdos&ab_channel=TheosThinkTank
- Worldviews: A Multidisciplinary Report: <https://religioueducationcouncil.org.uk/rec/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/REC-Worldview-Report-A4-v2.pdf>
- [Video 1: “What does good RE look like?”](#).
- [Video 2: “What is this approach?”](#)
- [Video 3: “What is religion?”](#)

Session 2: How ‘Religion & Worldviews’-ready are you? (approx. 90 mins)

This session is designed to be delivered to teachers who are somewhat familiar with the R&W approach (if not – they need to attend Session 1 ahead of Session 2). This session can be shortened to 60 mins, especially if colleagues have been asked to watch the videos prior to attending the training.

The aims of Sessions 2 are to:

- Get teachers to talk about their own practice and evaluate where they’re at when it comes to adopting a R&W approach in the classroom.
- Get teachers to reflect on their own curriculum, and help them evaluate to what extent they are already working towards a R&W approach.

Preparation and Equipment:

- Ask teachers to bring an overview document of their own curriculum and 2 -3 student workbooks.
- Flip chart paper, highlighter pens in two different colours and flip chart paper pen.

For Activity 2, teachers will be encouraged to reflect on their own practice by engaging with a self-assessment table, using a number of key questions as prompts. It is up to the trainer to choose relevant questions. Here are some examples of questions which may be adapted:

- Do you embed diversity within your teaching about religions?
 - What does that diversity look like?
- Do you encourage students to look at nonreligion and religion(s) through different perspectives?
- Do you identify differences and similarities between different traditions, beliefs, and rituals?
 - How do you build this into the RS classroom without centring Christianity?
- Do you talk about diversity of (non)religion and belonging in society?
- Do you use different disciplinary lenses to teach RS?
- Do you use lived religion as a lens to make sense of traditions, beliefs, and rituals?
- To what extent do you acknowledge the body and the emotions, as well as the cognitive?
- To what extent does your curriculum include:
 - People's lived experiences of (non)religion?
 - Diversity within (non)religious traditions?
- To what extent does your curriculum acknowledge that worldviews might be informed by religion AND nonreligion (rather than either/or)?
- To what extent does your curriculum acknowledge that relationships with (non)religion are not fixed and will evolve over a life-course?

See PowerPoint slides (and notes) for Session 2. Further resources are signposted in the notes, and include:

- Exemplar lessons on identity and stereotyping:
<https://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/resource/exemplar-lessons/>
- [Video 4: "What is a worldview?"](#)

Session 3: How do you organise R&W in the classroom? (approx. 60-90 mins)

This section is designed to be delivered to teachers who are familiar with the R&W approach, and are ready to implement it in the RS classroom.

The aims for Session 3 are to:

- Help teachers understand what a personal/individual worldview is.
- Help teachers understand what an organised/institutional worldview is.

- Encourage teachers to reflect on other levels that might exist (e.g. communal worldviews)
- Explain that RS studies the relationship between the different levels of worldviews (personal, communal, organised) to understand how worldviews change.
- To understand the importance of balancing organised, communal, and personal worldviews in RS and how a R&W approach lends itself to addressing the sometimes missing and marginalised voices in the study of RS.

Preparation and Equipment:

- Ask teachers to bring an overview document of their own curriculum and 2 -3 pupils workbooks
- Flip chart paper, flip chart paper pen, post-its and pens

See PowerPoint slides (and notes) for Session 3. Further resources are signposted in the notes, and include:

- [Video 5: “What is an organised worldview?”](#)
- [Video 6: “What is a personal worldview?”](#)
- [‘Nobody stands nowhere’](#) is a video that is often used in the classroom to start unpacking the concept of worldview. NB: the video does not capture the importance of investigating the interplay between organised and personal worldviews; it will be the role of the teacher to do so.

Session 4: Supporting the implementation of a R&W approach in the curriculum (approx. 60-90 mins)

This session is to be delivered to curriculum designers (e.g. RS leads; heads of department). It might be that you are within a MAT Trust and need to disseminate information across different schools, or that you are an RE Hub Lead, for example.

While this section has not been specifically designed to be delivered to teachers who are not involved in curriculum design, it can be easily be adapted should the videos be useful to teachers in your own school context.

NB: This session can be cut down to 60 mins by choosing 5 questions from the PowerPoint provided.

The aims of Session 4 are to:

- Equip RS leads to answer questions about the R&W approach.
- Equip RS leads to respond to criticisms and help address possible anxieties regarding the R&W approach.

Preparation and Equipment:

- Flip chart paper, flip chart paper pen, post-its and pens

See PowerPoint slides (and notes) for Session 4. Further resources are signposted in the notes, and include:

- [Video 7: “What the religion and worldviews approach is not”](#)
- [Video 8: “What the religion and worldviews approach is not \(continued\)”](#)
- The R&W Q&A created by the Religious Education Council for England and Wales (REC):
<https://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/resource/worldviews-introduction-faqs/>
- The REC’s handbook for curriculum writers:
<https://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/resource/religion-and-worldviews-approach-handbook/>

What happens next?

Once you have finished delivering the training to colleagues, the journey towards adopting a R&W approach in the RS classroom truly begins! The summary infographic provided in this pack should be given to teachers as they finish the course (an online version is better than a paper version as the document includes a number of hyperlinks).

It is recommended that you work with teachers to go over your units of work to ensure that a R&W is adopted throughout the curriculum. Once again, reassure teachers: adopting a R&W approach is unlikely to mean you have to re-write the whole RS curriculum! The pedagogical change may simply mean approaching some topics differently, and having to think of different types of activities and questions to ask students. Providing colleagues with examples of lesson plans is often useful, especially if your school is new to the R&W approach.

As the trainer, you may find it useful to reach out to colleagues in your locality who are also working on RE. You can reach out to your local RE Hub regional lead, or find out about local groups on the [RE Hub website](#). You may want to have yours and your colleagues' achievements acknowledged by applying for the [RE Quality Mark](#) (REQM). This can be a great way to celebrate the great work that you and your pupils are doing, recognise your high quality RE and good practice, and help raise the profile of RE within your school. For more information, please visit:

<https://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/our-work/reqm/about/>.

Finally, we would be grateful if you could leave us feedback by clicking [here](#) or scanning the QR code below:



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