

Electronic revision guide

Graham School Science College: Amanda Head

Purpose

The point of this study was to create an effective revision website that would be accessible to all students and would provide a more imaginative learning experience and one that would engage students. This was seen as a more compelling way to teach students to revise as it was created by the students themselves and they are writing for a wider audience.

The aims were:

- to design a compelling religious studies revision guide that would engage students;
- to allow students to become researchers and independent learners, whilst also sharing ideas of belief with others;
- to create an opportunity to create and develop their own ideas, to challenge and encourage creativity in religious studies.

The objectives were to consolidate learning, to identify strengths/weaknesses of student learning and to identify areas of development needed in teaching methods. Students were to use key words and concepts that express beliefs, teachings and sources.

Main emphasis

The topic for investigation is 'Religious and non religious ideas of design, causation, evil and suffering'. It covers the 'Belief in God' module in our GCSE course. This links to the key concepts of 'beliefs, teachings and sources' and 'meaning, purpose and truth', covering both learning about and learning from religion.

The project makes links with ICT and science and, in some areas, media studies. It will also include an analysis of assessment for learning.

School profile

Total number of learners	1,300
Age range	11-16
Specialist status	Science College
Level 5 and above in key stage 3 tests (2007)	English 73% Maths 81% Science 82%
Five A*-C at GCSE (2007)	66.22%
Special educational needs	130

Graham School Science College is the largest 11-16 Secondary School in North Yorkshire. It is one of 5 secondary schools in Scarborough. The school is very popular and most students

come from nine partner schools in the local area. The school undertakes to provide excellent, high quality education and care for its students in an environment where all members of the community are valued and achieve their potential.

In the religious studies department:

- all year 10/11 students take full GCSE Edexcel course;
- there are 5 full time RS staff and 2 part time staff;
- an assistant head of RS has recently been appointed to help me as I fulfil my AST role;
- all students at KS4 have 5 hours for RS each fortnight;
- as a department we are situated in 3 portacabins and have the part-time use of classroom in the school;
- there is a good range of up-to-date resources, including text books, interactive whiteboard and laptops.

We work closely with York St John, York and regularly address PGCE students on assessment for learning and thinking skills. We are also involved in assessing presentations of RS students on PGCE courses. We take students from York for 1&2 school placements.

We also work with other curriculum areas to develop teaching and learning and have worked closely with Art and D&T, as well as the Humanities area.

Question 1: What were we trying to achieve?

What were our learners like at the start?

This is a project designed with a top set year 10 GCSE RS group, 25 in total. The group I am working with are mostly high achievers expected to achieve A*-B grades at GCSE. The class is made up mostly of boys. (21 boys, 4 girls).

The class are keen and well motivated. We wanted to create some space for students to reflect on their learning and to create an opportunity to develop a revision guide for themselves and others that would be applicable to this age range. The content would be based on the syllabus but there would be room for students to create an individual learning experience.

What differences did we want to see in our learners?

Main priorities for our curriculum development

The reason a top set was chosen to begin this project was because they would set a high order example of learning, yet at the same time there would be some able students in the group who would find the technical side of this a challenge, taking them out of their comfort zone. It was also designed to support the broader aims of the curriculum. This group of learners is extremely able and the majority of students have targets of A and A* grades. This project would enable them to communicate more effectively with other students who are less able, but who may be as or more competent with technology. The latter would hopefully encourage this *'buddy up'* scheme and would have a dual role.

The aim was to develop a compelling learning experience that would engage students and allow them to work together. The study was also intended to deepen students' understanding of their own and other people's beliefs.

The activity itself was intended to help all learners become more independent and to enable them to gather information and work out how to communicate it effectively to others.

Students have already designed PowerPoint presentations and revision place mats. The next stage was for them to develop skills that would enable them to learn as effectively as possible, whilst still engaging and motivating them.

In terms of *knowledge and understanding*, students would learn how religions / philosophies have developed beliefs and teachings within their own traditions (A: beliefs, teachings and sources), and how to communicate these and their own ideas confidently to others.

The *attitudes and behaviour* that we want students to develop are related to the concepts above but also to how people tackle the 'big questions of life' (E: Meaning and purpose and truth). In addition to this we wanted students to investigate these concepts and to understand how people make informed decisions.

Question 2: How did we organise learning to achieve our aims?

How did we set about making a change?

We first worked out a key question that would provide a focus for the activity and came up with '*What are the main things a young person living in today's world should know and understand about belief in God?*'

The task would be for students to produce their own electronic revision guide to the 'Belief in God' unit of the GCSE course in such a way that it could be used to help another student know and understand the main points of the unit.

The class is timetabled for 1 hour every other week in the ICT room. We also have 20 laptops in the RS department so students have another hour, two in all.

The idea is to extend this to other groups when it is up and running. The students from this class will then demonstrate their electronic revision guides and explain the rationale behind it. This class will then '*buddy up*' with another class to guide them in the creation of another section of the Edexcel syllabus so that the process will continue and they will in turn teach another group to create another electronic guide.

The students are looking at AT1 (A) 'Beliefs, Teachings and Sources' in that they are focusing on key teachings on ultimate questions about belief.

In relation to AT2, students are exploring some of these ultimate questions and looking at how the search for meaning and purpose is expressed in the Christian tradition.

The key concepts that are outlined above are linked to each other throughout the study and provide the basis for evaluative reflection.

We already have high expectations of students' ability to question and investigate ideas, beliefs and values, so we wanted to continue to develop this and allow them to practice investigative techniques whilst encouraging them to consider the main question(s) about faith and the impact on young people.

There was no significant change in timetable/ staffing arrangements in order for this study to begin. We identified cross-curricular links with ICT, Media, and Science and aim to cooperate with colleagues in building connections with the programmes of study in these areas.

Question 3: How well have we achieved our aims?

What differences are evident? What impact have we made on our learners?

Several students have done more on their revision guide at home without being told, so from that point of view it has captured some imaginations.

This project I feel has so far been beneficial as it has offered the boys more scope to show off their technical knowledge and to present the material in a form that is more applicable to their learning.

Students appear to be more detailed in their expression of beliefs due I think to the fact that they are writing for people other than themselves and the teacher, i.e their peers.

Information appears to be more accurate and students are talking about the content of their work using more subject specific language and questioning belief more.

It has encouraged students to become researchers and to develop a more inquisitive and imaginative way in which to convey information. They have had to make sure they understand the information they are using in order to develop their revision guide.

Students are certainly keen and show enthusiasm. The evidence is that between lessons students are showing me what they have done and ask me if they can include certain things. Also the fact that students have completed their revision guide at home is an indication that they are finding the task interesting challenging and a compelling way of transferring their understanding.

The enthusiasm that students have shown has extended to sharing their ideas with other students from different classes.