

# Opting for RS

## Suggestions for using the film



## Audience

Students thinking about exam options at 14 and 16; parents; heads of sixth form; senior leadership teams; curriculum managers.

## Activity suggestions for...

- RE subject leaders
- SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education)

## Additional materials for download

The **Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies** at the University of Leeds produces resources to support Theology, Religious Studies and Philosophy students, including **Employability Guides** for students in higher education. They are helpful for RS teachers, particularly those teaching students A level Religious Studies. These are available from the following site:

[http://www.prs.heacademy.ac.uk/publications/emp\\_guides.html](http://www.prs.heacademy.ac.uk/publications/emp_guides.html)

# RE subject leader

## You might be: preparing students for exam options

*Note:* this film is designed for use with options at 14 and at 16, preparing for GCSE and for A level. You will need to decide when it is best to use it and with which year groups. The following suggestions are generic and can apply to both age groups, unless specified otherwise.

**In class, before showing the film you could:** ask students to work in pairs and write down what they think RS is about, what skills it might develop, and what it might be useful for in later life.

### Show the film.

**Ask students** the same questions, based on what they have watched – see how the film has changed their perceptions.

**Ask your students** what three questions they would like to ask any of the students in the film. The film talks about lots of skills developed through RS. **Get students to identify these skills** and then work with them.

- They could **rank skills** in order of value or importance to school, or to specified careers, or to life in general.
- They could **sort them into groups** – looking for which are subject-specific study skills, which are generic study skills, and which are more about personal development. (These may overlap.) Which are attitudes rather than skills?
- **Identify skills** that they also develop in other subjects and those that are **unique to RS**.

The following table lists some skills/attitudes referred to in the film:

Asking philosophical questions	Justifying views	Evaluating arguments
Personal reflection	Learning about beliefs	Communication skills
Group discussion	Essay writing	Critical thinking
Presentation skills	Research	Developing confidence
Learning from great thinkers from past and present	Willingness to change your mind	Knowledge and understanding of religious and non-religious beliefs and practices
Seeing the bigger picture – relate studies to wider world	Developing understanding and respect	Presenting arguments with evidence
Listening to other points of view	Informed debate	Applying ethical theories
Exploring ideas	Challenging points of view	Evaluating ideas
Discovering answers for yourself	Engaging with great thinkers	Appreciating diversity
Thinking for yourself	Open-mindedness	Empathy
Analysing ideas	Clarifying beliefs	Writing clearly
Clarifying ideas	Assessing the impact of ideas	Broadening your horizons

**Invite** in some Year 11 students to talk to Year 9s, and Year 13s to talk to Year 11s. Allow students to interview them.

**Give your students a summary of the specification** you are offering. Show them how this specification enables them to develop the skills mentioned above. Give some specific examples.

You might like to **prepare a leaflet/booklet for options evenings**. The A level one could follow the outline of the film.

- A brief overview of the specification, an outline of the kinds of activities you use to teach students, the benefits and skills developed, and a list of the university/employment destinations of past students.
- Ask some of your former students to write a piece for you outlining the benefits of RS in their subsequent studies and employment.
- This booklet can be given out at options evenings – parents are often very interested in the range of possibilities that studying RS can open up.

You might like to find some way of **showing the film to parents** at an options evening. If that is not possible, you can **make links to the film** on your school website.

### You might be: looking to offer RS as an option

**Invite** your curriculum manager, head of faculty, head of sixth form, senior leadership team, and link governor to a meeting where you show them the film **to help them appreciate the depth and value of RS** as an option. This would be helpful if you are hoping to start an RS option, or even if your subject is more established.

**Have some of your own RE students present** to talk about their perceptions of RS and its relevance to their studies and personal development. The film presents the key ideas in a very concise form, but your students will be more persuasive as they ask for an exam option!

### You might want to take things further...

You could **ask for some funding to produce a film of your own**, showcasing the best of your department, or following up some former students.

In the film, students talk about the value of the subject in the wider social and cultural context. You could use it to **encourage sixth-form students to explore** the changing role of faith and religion in the contemporary world **as an Extended Project**. Producing their own film would be a valuable outcome for this.

## You might be: reviewing the place of examination RS in your school

In your department or faculty meeting, think about the following questions:

- What do students enjoy in RS in our school?
- What does their RS learning help them to do?
- Is it making a difference?
- How do we know?
- How well are students doing?
- To what extent are they having a chance to develop the skills described in the film?
- Are there some changes we need to make to how exam RS is delivered? More active learning and skills development?
- Are there ways of linking with other schools to put on RS conferences? This works particularly well for A level RS.

## You might be: leading some department or faculty INSET

**You could be:** focusing on improving teaching and learning in RS

- **Before watching** the film ask colleagues to compile a list of teaching and learning strategies that they have found to work best to engage students in exam RS.
- Ask them to highlight any on the list which are used regularly in RS in your department.
- What skills are these strategies seeking to develop? Match skills to activities.
- Watch the film. What skills are mentioned? What strategies are mentioned or implied?
- Given the extensive range of skills and attitudes the students refer to in the film, compare them with the skills your lessons are developing. Work out if there are any gaps in your provision.
- Explore what kinds of tasks and activities are required to develop these skills.
- Explore some good RE teaching and learning activities. For example
  - secondary curriculum booklets '(Developing Secondary RE series; 'Engaging with Secondary RE' series; 'Questions in RE' series (from 2009)) available from RE Today [www.retoday.org.uk](http://www.retoday.org.uk). These are aimed mainly at 11s–14s but include many ideas that can be applied to 14–19 RS teaching.
  - *A to Z of Practical Learning Strategies*, 2nd edn, ed. Joyce Mackley and Pamela Draycott. ISBN: 978-1-904024-55-2 available from RE Today [www.retoday.org.uk](http://www.retoday.org.uk).

# SACRE

## You might be: planning a new Agreed Syllabus

### You could:

- show the film, in conjunction with *RE in the curriculum* and the NATRE secondary film, *What do you know about Religious Education?* at the first meeting of the Agreed Syllabus Conference to stimulate discussion about the aims and purposes of RE in the curriculum. You could work out how examination RS sits alongside, complements and grows out of RE.

## You might be: inducting a new member of SACRE

### You could:

- show this film in conjunction with the NATRE films *RE in the curriculum*, *What is RE?* and *What do you know about Religious Education?* to develop understanding of the role and purpose of RE and RS in the curriculum.

### Talking points:

- in what ways are RE and RS, as shown in these films, similar to or different from your expectations?
- are there any questions about RE or RS you wish to explore further?

### Taking it further:

- Are there any things that you might be able to offer to schools to support them in their provision of RE and exam RS?

# SACRE and community groups

## You might be: seeking to encourage wider understanding of RE in the curriculum

### You could:

- ask SACRE members to bring the NATRE films to the attention of their various constituencies in order to generate discussion and further understanding about contemporary RE and RS.
- bring this and the other films to the attention of members of your group or faith community to generate discussion and further understanding about the purpose and value of RE and RS.