



## **A Guide to the New *Studies of Religion Stage 6 Syllabus***

The revised *Studies of Religion Stage 6 Syllabus* will replace the current syllabus (1999). It will be implemented in Year 11 in 2006 and will be first examined in the HSC in 2007.

### **Introduction**

While the revised *Studies of Religion Stage 6 Syllabus* is different in many ways from the current syllabus, there are also many similarities. The revised syllabus continues to place emphasis on what students know and can do as a result of their learning of Studies of Religion. The learning outcomes continue to be differentiated between the Preliminary and HSC courses and cater for the full range of students.

*Studies of Religion Stage 6* is available for study as:

- Studies of Religion I – a 120-hour course comprising a 60-hour Preliminary course and a 60-hour HSC course
- Studies of Religion II – a 240-hour course comprising a 120-hour Preliminary course and a 120-hour HSC course.

The content in the revised syllabus builds on the current syllabus but has been reorganised and presented in a clearer format. The *Students learn about* and *Students learn to* statements describe the scope and depth of the content.

- In the SOR I Preliminary course students will continue to study the *Nature of Religion and Beliefs* and religious traditions. Students studying SOR II will continue to study religion in early Australia.
- Religion in modern Australia continues as the HSC core study for both SOR I and SOR II. It has been revised and is now titled *Religion and Belief Systems in Australia post-1945*.
- SOR I students will study two religious traditions in both the Preliminary and HSC courses.
- SOR II students will study three religious traditions as well as taking additional studies in both the Preliminary and HSC courses.

Current teaching and learning programs may have to be modified to meet the requirements of the new syllabus and many existing units of work can form the basis of effective programs. Resources currently in use will continue to be relevant; some additional resources will also be required. The experience teachers gained in implementing the *Studies of Religion Stage 6 Syllabus* (1999) will assist with the implementation of the new syllabus.

## What are the overall improvements?

The revised *Studies of Religion Stage 6 Syllabus* has:

- a more thorough developmental approach, where the HSC course builds on the Preliminary course in relation to:
  - knowledge and understanding
  - skills including research
  - sophistication of content and concepts
- fewer, simpler outcomes, organised in relation to the objectives and the content
- a simpler, more accessible content structure
- two religious traditions required for study in SOR I, in both the Preliminary and the HSC courses
- an additional religious tradition and other additional material in SOR II
- an emphasis on a study of the whole religious tradition
- a study of the forms and features of religious traditions in the Preliminary course; variants are no longer specified across the syllabus
- Aboriginal beliefs and spiritualities included in the core of both the Preliminary and HSC courses
- issues for study within each topic, including within the religious traditions
- content for each section of the syllabus reorganised to ensure greater coherence and more consistency for students across the whole course regardless of the options studied.

## Features of the syllabus

### Course structure (p 9)

The new Preliminary course provides a mandatory core study, *Nature of Religion and Beliefs*, and the requirement to study two religious traditions in SOR I and three religious traditions in SOR II. There are also additional studies in SOR II for *Religion in Australia pre-1945* and *Religions of Ancient Origin*. The changes are designed to allow flexibility of programming while at the same time providing a basis for study and coherence with the HSC course without overlap or duplication.

The HSC courses in both SOR I and II are structured with a core study of *Religion and Belief Systems in Australia post-1945* and two religious traditions in SOR I and three religious traditions in SOR II that focus on the whole religious tradition. There are also additional topics for SOR II, *Religion and Peace* and *Religion and Non-religion*.

### Outcomes (pp 10–11)

The outcomes in the revised syllabus:

- have been reduced in number
- are simpler, clearer and more accessible for students and teachers
- link the syllabus objectives with the content to provide a basis for teaching, learning and assessment of achievement
- show development of complexity and heightened requirements from the Preliminary course to the HSC course.

## Features of the content pages

### Buddhism

22 indicative hours

The focus of this study is Buddhism, one of the major religious traditions, as a living religious system.

#### Outcomes

The focus is an overview linking key features and issues to the content of the study.

Student:

- investigates religious traditions and belief systems
- examines significant aspects of religious traditions
- describes the influence of religious traditions in the life of adherents
- P6** selects and uses relevant information about religion from a variety of sources
- P7** undertakes effective research about religion, making appropriate use of time and resources
- P8** uses appropriate terminology related to religion and belief systems
- P9** effectively communicates information, ideas and issues using appropriate written, oral and graphic forms.

The outcomes are linked to the content.

#### Content

Students learn about:	Students learn to:
<p><b>Origins</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the historical and cultural context in which Buddhism began</li> <li>• the Buddha</li> <li>• the formation of the Sangha</li> <li>• the early councils, including the first council at Rajagaha and the second council at Vesali</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• outline the historical and cultural context in which Buddhism began</li> <li>• examine the principal events of the Buddha's life, including the enlightenment</li> <li>• explain why the Buddha is the model of Buddhist life</li> <li>• describe the early formation of the Sangha within the first five years, including Mahapajapati's request for a female Sangha</li> <li>• identify the importance of the first two councils in the development of Buddhism</li> </ul>

Content expressed as *Students learn about* statements in a consistent format to be used in conjunction with *Students learn to* statements.

### **Content (pp 13–51)**

The content has been reorganised and refined to establish a common structure that links the Preliminary and HSC courses and provides clear connections between the different parts of each course. The main elements of the content page structure comprise the topic Focus, the Outcomes, the *Students learn about* and *Students learn to* statements. All topic content pages are on two facing pages.

The content of the Preliminary course includes:

- a core and a coherent study of Religious Traditions
- two new topics in the SOR II course, *Religions of Ancient Origin* and *Religion in Australia pre-1945*.

The content of the HSC course includes:

- a core and a further-developed study of religious traditions
- removal of the *Cross-religion Studies* with students now required to continue the study of the religious traditions from the Preliminary course, with an emphasis on the whole religious tradition
- religion and belief in Australia has been retained as a central feature of the core study – *Religion and Belief Systems in Australia post-1945*
- two new topics introduced into SOR II, *Religion and Peace* and *Religion and Non-religion*.

### **Assessment (pp 53–61)**

The structure of the examination and school-based assessment reflects the structure of the syllabus. There are some changes to the internal assessment advice to simplify and improve assessment requirements. These are found on pp 56–57 of the syllabus.

Teachers can determine the range and style of tasks they allocate within the course.

The revised examination specifications are on pp 58–59 of the syllabus.

A specimen 2007 HSC examination paper package has been developed. This package includes the specimen examination paper, sample marking guidelines, mapping grid and draft performance band descriptors. The package will be available on the Board's website from 23 May 2005.

### **What support is available for implementing the revised syllabus?**

Current resources are appropriate for use with the new syllabus, although adjustments may be needed in the way teachers use them. There is some requirement for additional resources for the new areas of content in the syllabus.

The Office of the Board of Studies is developing a Studies of Religion Stage 6 support document. It will be placed on the Board of Studies website later in 2005 to assist teachers in the implementation of the revised syllabus.

School sectors and the Association for Studies of Religion will provide support for the implementation of the *Studies of Religion Stage 6 Syllabus*.