



### **Commuters/bus**

Commuters aboard a London bus; epa european pressphoto agency b.v. / Alamy Stock Photo

The WJEC Eduqas GCSE Religious Studies specification (9-1) aims to develop learners' knowledge and understanding of religions and non-religious beliefs, such as atheism and humanism. Throughout the teaching of the course, as well as in the examinations, there are numerous opportunities for learners to study and reflect upon non-religious perspectives alongside their study of religion and ethical and philosophical themes. Indeed, there are specific areas of the qualification which require learners to make explicit and accurate reference to non-religious perspectives. These are explained later on.

### **What constitutes a non-religious perspective?**

A non-religious perspective does not necessarily directly contradict or challenge religious views. For instance, it is often the case that non-religious and religious people share many common values in their approaches to morality. A non-religious perspective is one that does not rely upon reference to religious sources of wisdom, such as religious leaders, sacred texts and so on. Instead, it is reasoned through logic, reference to science or through experience.

### **Why Study non-religious perspectives as part of a religious studies qualification?**

In November 2015, in a case brought by three families (supported by the British Humanist Association) against the Department for Education, the High Court ruled that, if GCSE Religious Studies were to meet the legal requirements for the provision of Religious Education (RE) in general, 'the state must accord equal respect to different religious convictions, and to non-religious beliefs' (Paragraph 39).

Moreover, non-religious world views are increasingly a feature of contemporary British society and therefore it is proper and necessary that they are treated with equal respect to religious perspectives in the classroom. Indeed, the latest British Social Attitudes Survey (2014) found that almost 51% of people in the UK claimed to have no religion, and the figure was almost 69% for people aged 18-24.

Gaining insight into non-religious perspectives will help learners to be able to appreciate that whilst the religious traditions of Great Britain are, in the main, Christian, it is also home to a wide range of people, from a vast array of religious traditions and those for whom non-belief in God or gods is a way of life. It is essential to a balanced and objective study of contemporary religion and belief to acknowledge and engage with these non-religious perspectives, alongside diversity within and across religions. Furthermore, knowledge and understanding of non-religious sources of authority will enhance learners' potential to construct well-argued, well-informed, balanced and structured written arguments. Considering non-religious as well as religious views provides opportunities for learners to engage with questions of belief, value, meaning, purpose, truth, and their influence on human life. It also helps deepen their understanding of the relationships between people in our pluralistic and diverse society; challenging learners to reflect on and develop their own values, beliefs and attitudes in the light of what they have learnt. Learning about non-religious views contributes to a learner's preparation for adult life in a pluralistic society and global community.

### Opportunities within the Specification for Engaging with Non-Religious Perspectives

All of the 15 mark D questions (AO2) require learners to refer to 'religion and belief' in their answers. Importantly, within the specification, **belief encompasses non-religious, as well as religious belief and world views**. Therefore, if time and interest permit, a wider range of non-religious perspectives than those stipulated in the specification can, be taught and will be given credit in examination responses. For both Route A and B, there are D questions which require that learners make specific reference to non-religious perspectives. This is explained in detail below.

### Summary of Specific Non-Religious Content

As a Religious Studies qualification, there is no requirement for a systematic study of non-religious perspectives, but learners will be expected to know and understand the non-religious perspectives stipulated in the specification. In addition, they may refer, where appropriate, to non-religious world views throughout the course.

There are specific areas within the GCSE Religious Studies specification in which candidates will be expected to make explicit reference to non-religious perspectives as set out below:

### Questions Requiring Specific Reference to Non-Religious Perspectives

ROUTE A	ROUTE B
<p><b>COMPONENT 1</b></p> <p><b>RELIGIOUS, PHILOSOPHICAL AND ETHICAL STUDIES IN THE MODERN WORLD</b></p> <p><b>THEME 2: Issues of Life and Death</b></p> <p><b>Areas of Study:</b></p> <p><b>1) THE WORLD</b> The relationship between Christian views and non-religious views of creation and the extent to which they conflict; Stephen Hawking's view of the Big Bang</p> <p>Non-religious beliefs, teachings and attitudes about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dominion</li> <li>• Stewardship</li> <li>• environmental responsibility</li> <li>• sustainability</li> <li>• global citizenship</li> </ul> <p><i>'Humanists for a better world'</i></p> <p><b>2) THE ORIGIN AND VALUE OF HUMAN LIFE</b> Non-religious beliefs about evolution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charles Darwin</li> <li>• Richard Dawkins</li> </ul> <p>Non-religious views on the importance of human and animal life (with reference to abortion and euthanasia)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peter Singer's views on 'speciesism'</li> <li>• Humanist 'Dignity in Dying' Movement</li> </ul> <p><b>3) BELIEFS ABOUT DEATH AND THE AFTERLIFE</b> Humanist/atheist beliefs and teachings about life after death (not on specification, but necessary to cover this by implication)</p> <p>How Humanist funerals in Britain reflect beliefs about the after-life</p>	<p><b>COMPONENT 1</b></p> <p><b>FOUNDATIONAL CATHOLIC THEOLOGY</b></p> <p><b>THEME 1: Origins and Meaning</b></p> <p><b>Areas of Study:</b></p> <p><b>1) ORIGINS AND MEANING</b> The relationship between Catholic and non-religious views about the origins of the universe and of human beings (Stephen Hawking's theory of the Big Bang) and the extent to which these conflict</p> <p>Comparison of scientific theory of evolution (Charles Darwin, Richard Dawkins), with Catholic beliefs about the purposeful creation of human beings; the extent to which creation and evolution are compatible, with reference to Pope John Paul II's Message To The Pontifical Academy Of Sciences: On Evolution (22 October 1996, paragraphs 3 &amp; 4)</p> <p>Non-religious views about the value of human life, including attitudes toward abortion</p> <p>Humanist critiques of Catholic beliefs about sanctity of life issues (for example, Peter Singer's views on 'speciesism') and Catholic responses to these challenges.</p> <p><b>2) BELIEFS: CREATION</b> A comparison of Catholic and Humanist beliefs on the importance of preserving the planet and the environment</p>



ROUTE A	ROUTE B
Examination Question 2(d)	Examination Question 1(d) *SPAG marks also apply to this question
<p><b>AO2</b></p> <p><b>Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief*, including their significance and influence</b></p> <p>* The term 'belief' includes religious and non-religious belief as appropriate to the subject content requirements</p>	
<p>For these questions, a distinct set of Band Descriptors, referring specifically to the requirements on candidates to make reference to non-religious beliefs will be used to assess responses.</p>	

## Humanism

### What is Humanism?

For our purposes, in delivering the non-religious content of the GCSE syllabus, learners will need a sound understanding of Humanism, but it is not an easily-defined term! Most simply put, Humanism can be regarded as the 'rejection of religion in favour of the advancement of humanity by its own efforts.' (*Collins Concise Dictionary*)

However, many Humanists prefer to be defined in more positive terms. Whilst Humanism cannot be viewed as a religion, it is often (and aptly) described as a 'worldview', with a set of core beliefs and values. The British Humanist Association sets out these values as follows:

A humanist...

- trusts to the scientific method when it comes to understanding how the universe works and rejects the idea of the supernatural (and is therefore an atheist or agnostic)
- makes their ethical decisions based on reason, empathy, and a concern for human beings and other sentient animals
- believes that, in the absence of an afterlife and any discernible purpose to the universe, human beings can act to give their own lives meaning by seeking happiness in this life and helping others to do the same.



**British Humanist Association logo**

British Humanist Association logo; <https://humanism.org.uk/>

<https://humanism.org.uk/humanism/>

Not all Humanists are atheists (but mostly they are atheists or strongly agnostic), and conversely, not all atheists (or agnostics) are Humanists. The Humanist movement, nationally and worldwide is seen by its members as a community of likeminded people, who broadly subscribe to the worldview outlined above. For many people, the realisation that they do not have faith in a god or gods can be a lonely and isolating experience, perhaps setting them at odds with their families, friends and their communities. Indeed, one of the undeniable benefits of organised religion for human wellbeing is the sense of belonging and acceptance within a community. For many people, belonging to a Humanist group or organisation, whilst it is certainly not regarded as a religion, fulfils this sense of belonging and togetherness.

There has been a tendency to misunderstand Humanism as a worldview concerned solely or primarily with the concerns of the human race, and lacking regard for other species and the environment. Of course, there will be some for whom this interpretation will be true (as with religious communities, there is much diversity within Humanism). However, the term Humanism, is better and more commonly understood as a trust in humanity to act for the benefit of all species and the environment as a whole, without recourse to a divine being to motivate us to do so. This is aptly demonstrated in the work of **Humanists for a Better World** (H4BW), a campaigning arm of the British Humanist Association, named in the specification.

As mentioned above, not all Humanists are convinced atheists. Indeed, some Humanists argue that the most philosophically an intellectually logical position is one of strong agnosticism; in the absence of conclusive proof of the absence of a deity (i.e. absence does not prove non-existence). Rather, the key issue for Humanists is not whether or not God or gods exist, but rather, they would argue, the need to focus on what can be seen and experienced in the world around us. Theirs is an empirical, rather than a faith-based approach to life.

Humanist thought is as old as humanity itself! Throughout the ages, and in most societies around the world, humanists have had a big influence on the shaping of ideas and culture. In today's world, the influence of secular Humanism is undoubtedly growing. Humanism and non-religious thought have a strong presence within the contemporary culture and life of Great Britain. Those identifying as Humanists equal and, by some estimates exceed the numbers of any of the major non-Christian faiths in the UK. In a 2014 YouGov survey, 6% of people identified as being not just non-religious, but as humanists (YouGov, 2014), and, as Dr Satvinder Juss, Professor of Law at King's College London reports, this is 'more than those who identify as Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Sikh, or Hindu.' Moreover, he asserts, recent data suggest that far more people, not formally identifying with Humanism, hold humanist worldviews. (Juss, 2014) . Therefore, when teaching about Humanism and non-religious perspectives, it is important to acknowledge that, as well as those who are officially part of Humanist groups, fellowships and organisations, there are many more who more generally subscribe to humanist principles in their daily lives and how they think about the world and their morality. In short, people are often Humanists without realising it, perhaps because they are not familiar with the term and what it stands for, or perhaps because they do not see it as important or desirable to put a label on their worldview or to be a part of an organisation. The Oxford Companion to the Mind sums this up well:

'Contemporary humanism is a morally concerned style of intellectual atheism openly avowed by only a small minority of individuals (for example, those who are members of the British Humanist Association [BHA]) but tacitly accepted by a wide spectrum of educated people in all parts of the Western world.'

Oxford Companion to the Mind

### Good without God?

There is still much prejudice concerning non-religious people and their approach to morality. Far from taking an 'anything goes' approach to making moral decisions, Humanists take very seriously the potential impact of their ethical choices on others, themselves and the world around them.

Rather than depending on divine command from scripture, which Humanists invariably regard as largely outdated and dubious in provenance; indeed, certainly not the word of a divine, supernatural power, Humanists make moral choices based on reason, empathy and respect for others. The vast majority of Humanists do not believe in an afterlife, so their actions are not undertaken with an ultimate reward or punishment in mind. Some religious believers may argue that the absence of belief in divine judgement can lead to immorality. A Humanist would strongly disagree with such a position, arguing instead, that a concern for the happiness and wellbeing of others, and the desire to avoid causing pain and suffering is sufficient guidance and motivation to lead a morally good life.

The Humanist rejection of an afterlife is aptly summed up by The British Humanist Association's motto 'for the one life we have'. On the whole, Humanists see religious believers' concern with divine reward and punishment as a preoccupation which devalues the goodness of actions, subtracting altruism from them. Humanists believe in doing good purely for the benefit of other humans, animals and the environment, as well as for the advancement of humanity.



**Badges**

Humanist badges; Evan Dawson / Alamy Stock Photo

## JUST A THEORY?

### Some Guidance on Scientific Terminology

When teaching about scientific theories, such as the Big Bang Theory or the Theory of Evolution, it is essential that students understand that scientists use the word 'theory' in a very different way than it is used generally. Words with both technical and everyday meanings can be a source of great confusion for students.

#### THE WORD THEORY IN EVERYDAY USE

In ordinary, everyday use, a theory denotes a hunch, a feeling or a good guess; something that is not proven, that is not fully supported by evidence. We often talk of theories quite flippantly; for instance I might say 'I have a theory that whenever I forget my umbrella, it's bound to rain'. Obviously, the placement of my umbrella has no bearing on atmospheric conditions, so such a theory is implausible and totally lacks credibility. More sensibly perhaps, we might have a theory about what the outcome of our favourite TV drama might be. Again, we cannot say with any certainty, but based on our knowledge

of the type of genre, the past actions of the characters and hints given in the plot so far, we can take an educated guess as to what may happen in the concluding episode. Our friends following the same drama may have very different ideas, based on their own interpretations of the plot and characters. What we are actually putting forward, in scientific terms, is a hypothesis, not a theory! A hypothesis is an educated guess, based on observation. It is a rational explanation of a single event (in this case the finale of the show) or phenomenon, based on observation, but which has not yet been proved or disproved. Most hypotheses can be supported or refuted by experimentation or continued observation. In this analogy, watching (observing) the final episode of the drama will prove or disprove your hypothesis.

Hence, common usage (some would say misuse) of the word theory leads many people to misunderstand what is meant by a scientific theory, and to dismiss scientific theories as mere scientific guesswork.

### SCIENTIFIC MEANING OF 'THEORY'

On the contrary, when scientists use the word 'theory', they mean something very different and distinct from what we mean in everyday usage. A theory in science has a very precise definition. The University of California, Berkeley's Understanding Science Project gives a clear and helpful explanation of how the word theory is used in scientific circles:

In science, a theory is a powerful explanation for a broad set of observations. To be accepted by the scientific community, a theory (in the scientific sense of the word) must be strongly supported by many different lines of evidence. So biological evolution is a theory (it is a well-supported, widely accepted, and powerful explanation for the diversity of life on Earth), but it is not "just" a theory.

[http://undsci.berkeley.edu/article/howscienceworks\\_19](http://undsci.berkeley.edu/article/howscienceworks_19)

A scientist may put forward a hypothesis – an educated guess or estimate based on rational observation, but it will only gain the status of a theory once it has been rigorously tested, supported by a substantial body of evidence and widely accepted by the scientific community. Thus, in science, a theory is a well-substantiated, well-supported, well-documented explanation for observations. A theory is a rational explanation that fits in with, and links together, all the observations. A theory can be used to make predictions. In science, an idea obtaining the status of a theory can be seen as the ultimate achievement; the highest accolade possible. It's the closest thing to a proven fact as anything in science can be.

### SCIENTIFIC LAW vs SCIENTIFIC THEORY

#### The LAW of Gravity and the THEORY of Evolution

There is another confusing element to teaching about scientific theories in Religious Studies, and that is the confusion that arises among students concerning what is meant by scientific law. Students often say things like 'evolution is a theory because it isn't proven, not like gravity, because there is a law of gravity'. The student is partially right, as he or she has observed that there is a law of gravity and no law of evolution, but the student is misunderstanding the term 'law' in science. It is not the case that a theory is promoted to a law when it is proven. A theory NEVER becomes a law! A law is a description of observations, often expressed in mathematical equations, whereas a theory is an explanation of

the descriptions. There is BOTH a law of gravity - expressed as an equation, and a theory of gravity; an explanation of gravitational force. Gravity has both a theory and a law.

So, in science, the meanings of theory and law are very similar. A theory is an explanation which is backed by considerable evidence, whilst a law is a set of regularities expressed mathematically. This is why Newton's Laws of Motion, for instance, are often referred to as laws and not theories. They are expressed with simple equations. Evolution, and indeed most of Biology (unlike Physics and Chemistry), cannot be expressed in succinct mathematical equations. Hence, evolution is referred to as a theory, rather than a law. A scientific law is not "better" or "more accurate" than a scientific theory. A law explains what will happen under certain circumstances, while a theory explains how it happens.

## NON-RELIGIOUS SOURCES OF WISDOM

### WHO COUNTS AS A NON-RELIGIOUS SOURCE OF WISDOM?

It is important to note that contributors to atheist and Humanist thought need not necessarily have been themselves atheists or agnostics. For instance Galileo and Copernicus posed strong scientific challenges to religion, but would certainly have seen themselves as Christians. However, their perspectives can be regarded as non-religious as they meet the criteria of being reliant upon reference to religious sources of wisdom, such as religious leaders, sacred texts and so on. Instead, the arguments marshalled by such thinkers were based on scientific reason, logic and empirical enquiry.

With regard to Charles Darwin, as a nineteenth-century Englishman, he would have had a strong cultural Christian identity and he certainly had a Christian upbringing, but whilst many have claimed that Darwin remained a Christian believer throughout his life, there is much evidence to the contrary. For instance, he wrote in a letter in 1880: 'I am sorry to have to inform you that I do not believe in the Bible as a divine revelation and therefore not in Jesus Christ as the son of God.'  
(<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/sep/15/charles-darwin-letter-auction-religion-bible-creationism>).

To sum up, a non-religious source of wisdom is one which, in itself, expresses a secular perspective on an issue, and may (but not necessarily) present a challenge to religious belief.

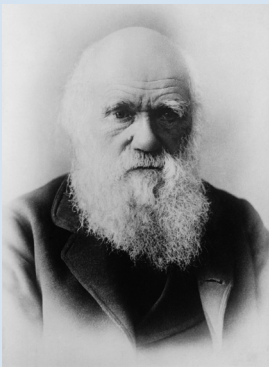
Within the Eduqas WJEC GCSE Religious Studies specification, learners should be familiar with the following thinkers as sources of wisdom for non-religious perspectives:


- Stephen Hawking;
- Richard Dawkins;
- Charles Darwin;
- Peter Singer.

In addition, the campaigning arm of the British Humanist Association, Humanists for a Better World (H4BW).


Depending on your context as well as your learners' interest and engagement, there will be many other non-religious sources of wisdom, which can apply to many areas of study within the specification.



<b>Charles Darwin</b> <b>1809-1882</b>  <b>Basic facts and key works</b>	<b>Specific content</b> <b>Component 1</b>	
	<b>Route A</b>  <b>Theme 2</b> <b>Issues of Life and Death</b>	<b>Route B</b>  <b>Theme 1</b> <b>Origins and Meaning</b>
<p>English naturalist who spent 5 years voyaging around the world studying variations in plants and animals. He recorded his findings and conclusions in his book <i>On the Origin of Species</i> published in 1859. It was an instant and controversial bestseller. By 1872, the book had had six editions, and it has become one of the most influential books of modern times. In it, Darwin laid the groundwork for modern botany, cellular biology, and genetics. In <i>The Origin of Species</i>, Darwin avoided inclusion of humankind, but this was addressed with the publication in 1871 of <i>The Descent of Man (and Selection in Relation to Sex)</i>. Darwin presented a strident and direct challenge to religious understandings of how God created the world and the creatures in it. Whilst Darwin was not the first to propose the idea of evolution, he was the first to give it credibility by advancing a thorough and convincing framework for his theory.</p> <p>Excellent information on Darwin and his discoveries may be found on BBC iWonder: <a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/timelines/zq8gcdm">http://www.bbc.co.uk/timelines/zq8gcdm</a></p> <p>Another very useful Darwin website: <a href="http://darwin-online.org.uk">http://darwin-online.org.uk</a></p>	<p><b>THE ORIGIN AND VALUE OF HUMAN LIFE</b></p> <p>Non-religious beliefs about evolution</p>	<p><b>ORIGINS AND MEANING</b></p> <p>Comparison of Darwin's scientific theory of evolution with Catholic beliefs about the purposeful creation of human beings; the extent to which creation and evolution are compatible</p>

<p><b>Richard Dawkins born 1941</b></p>  <p><b>Richard Dawkins</b>; Wikimedia Creative commons <a href="http://bit.ly/2cWAQkU">http://bit.ly/2cWAQkU</a></p> <p><b>Basic facts and key works</b></p>	<p><b>Specific content Component 1</b></p>	
	<p><b>Route A</b></p> <p><b>Theme 2 Issues of Life and Death</b></p>	<p><b>Route B</b></p> <p><b>Theme 1 Origins and Meaning</b></p>
<p>British scientist (evolutionary biologist) who holds the Charles Simonyi Chair for the Public Understanding of Science at Oxford University.</p> <p>Dawkins is a secular humanist and is one of the world's most outspoken atheists. He is openly and famously critical of religion. Dawkins sees the understanding of Darwinian evolution as a basic foundation of biology. He has written several bestselling science books, <i>The Selfish Gene</i> (1976), being the most seminal, where he sets out his theory that evolution is best understood as gene-centred.</p> <p>Dawkins most famous popular book remains <i>The God Delusion</i> (2006) which stridently sets out a case for atheism and against religion.</p> <p><a href="https://richarddawkins.net">https://richarddawkins.net</a></p>	<p><b>THE ORIGIN AND VALUE OF HUMAN LIFE</b></p> <p>Non-religious beliefs about evolution</p>	<p><b>ORIGINS AND MEANING</b></p> <p>Comparison of Darwin's scientific theory of evolution with Catholic beliefs about the purposeful creation of human beings; the extent to which creation and evolution are compatible</p>

<p><b>Stephen Hawking born 1942</b></p>  <p><b>Stephen Hawking;</b> Danita Delimont / Alamy Stock Photo</p> <p><b>Basic facts and key works</b></p>	<p><b>Specific content Component 1</b></p>	
	<p><b>Route A</b></p> <p><b>Theme 2 Issues of Life and Death</b></p>	<p><b>Route B</b></p> <p><b>Theme 1 Origins and Meaning</b></p>
<p>British scientist (theoretical physicist) who has written accessible bestselling books, such as A Brief History of Time (1988), as well as number of children's books to help promote interest in and understanding of cosmology and physics. A Brief History of Time attempts to answer fundamental questions about our creation and existence from a scientific perspective in a way that is accessible to non-scientists. A particularly useful resource for our purposes on the origins of the universe can be found by following this link: <a href="http://www.hawking.org.uk/the-beginning-of-time.html">http://www.hawking.org.uk/the-beginning-of-time.html</a></p> <p>Official website: <a href="http://www.hawking.org.uk">www.hawking.org.uk</a></p>	<p><b>THE ORIGIN AND VALUE OF HUMAN LIFE</b></p> <p>Stephen Hawking's view of the Big Bang</p>	<p><b>ORIGINS AND MEANING</b></p> <p>The relationship between Catholic and non-religious views about the origins of the universe and of human beings (Stephen Hawking's theory of the Big Bang) and the extent to which these conflict</p>

<b>Peter Singer</b> born 1946  <b>Peter Singer;</b> Wikimedia Creative Commons <a href="http://bit.ly/2cc7IV1">http://bit.ly/2cc7IV1</a> <b>Basic facts and key works</b>	<b>Specific content</b> <b>Component 1</b>	
	<b>Route A</b>  <b>Theme 2</b> <b>Issues of Life and Death</b>	<b>Route B</b>  <b>Theme 1</b> <b>Origins and Meaning</b>
<p>Australian philosopher (ethicist), currently professor of Bioethics at Princeton University.</p> <p>Author of the seminal book <i>Animal Rights</i>, 1975, in which he proposed the idea of 'speciesism' – the view that the assumed superiority of human life over other species has led to the subjugation and abuse of non-human animals.</p> <p>Other significant publications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Practical Ethics</i>, 1979</li> <li>• <i>The Life You Can Save</i>, 2009</li> <li>• <i>Godless Morality</i>, 2006</li> </ul> <p><a href="http://www.utilitarian.net/singer/by/200601--.html">http://www.utilitarian.net/singer/by/200601--.html</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.petersinger.info">www.petersinger.info</a></p>	<p><b>THE ORIGIN AND VALUE OF HUMAN LIFE</b></p> <p>Singer's idea of 'speciesism' in reference to views on the importance of human and animal life (with reference to abortion and euthanasia)</p>	<p><b>ORIGINS AND MEANING</b></p> <p>Singer's idea of 'speciesism' informing his critique of Catholic beliefs about sanctity of human life issues and Catholic responses to these challenges.</p>



## Humanists for a Better World (Routes A and B)

“Putting humanist values into action – because the whole world is in our hands.”



Humanists for a Better World, sometimes known as H4BW is network within the UK British Humanist Association which aims to highlight environmental and social issues of interest to Humanists and to encourage positive action. H4BW run and support a number of campaigns worldwide. Some current issues on which H4BW are campaigning are:

- Equality and Human Rights
- Bishops in the House of Lords
- Assisted Dying
- Animal Welfare

The British Humanist Association has very useful and comprehensive information on H4BW on its website:

<https://humanism.org.uk/about/h4bw/>

### Dignity in Dying (Route A, Euthanasia)

Dignity in Dying campaigns for terminally ill, mentally competent adults to have access to assisted dying with ‘upfront’ safeguards in place. It argues that these people should have the right to choose how, when and where they die. The Campaign for Dignity in Dying is not exclusively non-religious, as it has many religious people who are supporters, however, its aims and vision can be seen as at odds with traditional religious teachings on the sanctity of life and the view of many religious believers that only God can take human life.

Below is the campaign’s vision statement:

We believe that everyone has the right to a dignified death. This means:

- Choice over where we die, who is present and our treatment options.
- Access to expert information on our options, good quality end-of-life care, and support for loved ones and carers.
- Control over how we die, our symptoms and pain relief, and planning our own death.

<http://www.dignityindying.org.uk>

### Humanist Funerals (Route A)

More and more people are choosing non-religious funerals. Often, people who do not believe in God or an afterlife may feel that a religious funeral is not appropriate for them. Humanists see the meaning and purpose of life as making a positive contribution within this life – the one we can be really certain we do have. Most Humanists do not believe in a life after physical death, where the soul or spirit enters another state of being (heaven, hell, moksha or re-birth, for instance). Instead, for Humanists our afterlife can be regarded as the memories, and impact we have left on those we knew us, and the even the word around us! Therefore, a non-religious funeral, usually officiated by a Humanist celebrant, makes no mention of God, or the hope of an afterlife beyond this world. There are no religious readings or hymns, but other songs, reading or poems may be recited. Unlike religious services, the whole ceremony is focussed entirely on remembering and celebrating the life of the deceased person, and supporting and consoling their family and friends in their loss.

The celebrant will meet with the dying person if at all possible or with the family after the person's death in order to talk with them and get a good sense of the sort of person they will be speaking about. Unlike a marriage, there is no legally binding element of a funeral, so there is a lot of scope for how the ceremony will proceed.

<https://humanism.org.uk/ceremonies/non-religious-funerals>

## Assessing Questions Specifically Requiring Reference to Non-Religious Beliefs

**For the above questions, a distinct AO2 Band Descriptor table (shown below) will be used to assess responses.**

Band	Band Description	Total Mark
5	<p>An excellent, highly detailed analysis and evaluation of the issue based on detailed knowledge of religion, religious teaching and moral reasoning to formulate judgements and present alternative or different viewpoints. An excellent understanding of how belief influences individuals, communities and societies.</p> <p>An excellent, highly detail consideration of non-religious beliefs, such as those held by humanists and atheists.</p> <p>Uses and interprets religious/specialist language, terms and sources of wisdom and authority extensively, accurately and appropriately.</p>	13 - 15
4	<p>A very good, detailed analysis and evaluation of the issue based on accurate knowledge of religion, religious teaching and moral reasoning to formulate judgements and present alternative or different viewpoints. An very good understanding of how belief influences individuals, communities and societies.</p> <p>A very good, detail consideration of non-religious beliefs, such as those held by humanists and atheists.</p> <p>Uses and interprets religious/specialist language, terms and sources of wisdom and authority appropriately and in detail.</p>	10 - 12
3	<p>A good, generally detailed analysis and evaluation of the issue based on generally accurate knowledge of religion, religious teaching and moral reasoning to formulate judgements and present alternative or different viewpoints. A good understanding of how belief influences individuals, communities and societies.</p> <p>A good, highly detail consideration of non-religious beliefs, such as those held by humanists and atheists.</p> <p>Uses and interprets some religious/specialist language, terms and/or sources of wisdom and authority.</p>	7 - 9

Band	Band Description	Total Mark
2	<p>Limited statement(s) of more than one viewpoint based on limited knowledge of religion, religious teaching and moral reasoning to formulate judgements. A limited understanding of how belief influences individuals, communities and societies.</p> <p>A limited consideration of non-religious beliefs, such as those held by humanists and atheists.</p> <p>Uses limited religious/specialist language, terms and/or few sources of wisdom and authority.</p>	4 - 6
1	<p>A poor, very basic statement of a point of view and very limited attempt or no attempt to formulate judgements or offer alternative or different viewpoints. Tenuous attempt or no attempt made to demonstrate how belief influences individuals, communities and societies.</p> <p>A very basic consideration of non-religious beliefs, such as those held by humanists and atheists.</p> <p>Poor use or no use of religious/specialist language, terms and/or few sources of wisdom and authority.</p>	1 - 3
0	No relevant point of view stated.	0



## Exemplar Questions from Sample Assessment Materials

### Question 2: Issues of Life and Death

#### Route A, Component 1 (Full Course and Short Course)

(d) "It is a woman's right to choose abortion." [15]

Discuss the statement showing that you have considered more than one point of view. (You must refer to religious and non-religious beliefs, such as those held by Humanists and Atheists, in your answer.)

#### Mark Scheme

Non-religious points are shown in bold.

Refer to the relevant band descriptors in these marking guidelines. Candidates could include some or all of the following, but other relevant points should be credited.

The father should also have rights

There are no hard and fast rules. All medical situations depend upon the context: a relative/situationist approach Application of principle of utilitarianism

Doctors are the experts and know what they are doing

Each child should be a wanted child

Many religious traditions consider mother's life is more important if her life is at risk

Many religions believe days are fixed and a part of God's plan. Life is too sacred to be placed in the hands of human beings/sanctity of life. References to interpretation of scriptures and wisdom

General Synod urges that abortion law should be applied more strictly

As life is created by God it must be revered from the moment of conception

Reference may be made to the authority or magisterium of the Pope and the College of Bishops

Catechism points out that from the first moment of existence a human being has the rights of a human person

Bad karma can result from an abortion

The principle of ahimsa and non-violence would be the guide

Up to 4 months after conception, ensoulment has not taken place and the mother's rights are worth more than the child's

Jesus' teachings/religious leaders showed the importance of life

All life has atman and each atman is individual

Importance of Pikuach Nefesh

**Humanist belief that we do not have a soul and we are not linked to God or created by him.  
There is no divine plan for each of us**

**Peter Singer's ideas that human beings have no special right to life just because they are humans (speciesism)**

**Humanists would ask that circumstances be taken into account: rape, poverty, disability, situation of the Mother and/or Father etc. when considering abortion – quality of life is paramount**

### Route B, Component 1

#### Question 1: Origins and Meaning

(d) "The world is ours to do what we like with." Discuss this statement showing that you have considered more than one point of view. [15 + 6] (You must refer to religious and non-religious beliefs such as those held by Humanists and Atheists, in your answer.)

Marks for spelling, punctuation and the accurate use of grammar are allocated to this question.

#### Mark Scheme

Non-religious points are shown in bold.

Refer to the relevant band descriptors in these marking guidelines. Candidates could include some or all of the following, but other relevant points should be credited.

The world is a gift from God that should be cherished

The world should be protected for future generations; it is our responsibility as humans

The end of the world is coming soon anyway so we don't need to worry about the environment

God won't let the world be destroyed – he will intervene

Increased environmental challenges will lead to greater injustice and poverty

God gave us dominion over the earth so we can do what we like

We are the most intelligent creatures on the planet, so we should know best

**A Humanist/non-religious believer would say that we should cherish the planet as our home; we have social responsibility not linked to God or religion**

## FINDING USEFUL RESOURCES

**There are many teaching resources about Humanism on**

<http://understandinghumanism.org.uk>

The British Humanist Association - <https://humanism.org.uk/humanism/>

<http://plato.stanford.edu/index.html>

i For a very brief history of Humanist thought see <https://humanism.org.uk/humanism/the-humanist-tradition/>  
ii Juss, Satvinder, High Court ruling on Religious Education Legal guidance on what it means for local authorities, academies, schools, teachers, Agreed Syllabus Conferences, and SACREs, April 2014 <https://humanism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016-04-28-FINAL-High-Court-ruling-on-Religious-Education-legal-guidance.pdf>