

Religious and Moral Education Professional Learning Paper

Career-long Professional Learning : Judaism

The purpose of this professional learning paper

This professional learning paper aims to support Career-long Professional Learning (CLPL) in Religious and Moral Education specifically in relation to teaching about Judaism.

This paper has been produced collaboratively by Education Scotland and the [Scottish Council of Jewish Communities](#) to support practitioners developing and deepening their knowledge and understanding of Judaism, and so to support the delivery of high quality learning and teaching about Judaism in the Broad General Education. It aims to provide a professional learning resource for practitioners that will be supported by two Glow meets and a one-day conference on learning about Judaism in 2016.

This briefing paper aims to support practitioners through supporting Career-long Professional Learning around Judaism and Jewish belief and life.

It is important to note that CLPL is a career-long process and that there is no expectation that practitioners can answer all of the following questions now; rather, these should guide practitioners through reflecting on and evaluating their own knowledge and understanding, and the learning and teaching that results from it. This should support practitioners in planning and delivering high quality religious and moral education that addresses learning about Judaism accurately and authentically. This will assist learners in developing their understanding of Jewish beliefs, values, practices, and traditions, and so contribute to improved understanding of Judaism and a greater awareness of the diversity of belief in modern Scotland. It is considered that understanding Jewish beliefs, values, and practices and traditions will contribute significantly to a Scotland where everyone is valued and respected.

This briefing paper will be followed by a series of professional briefing papers exploring teaching about other religious and belief groups.



Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation no. SC 029438

222 Fenwick Road Tel: +44 (0)141-638 6411 scojec@scojec.org

Glasgow G46 6UE Fax: +44 (0)141-577 8202 www.scojec.org

What do I know and understand about Judaism?

The [Route Map through CLPL in RME](#) provides broad guidance around developing professional knowledge and understanding in RME, and is a good starting point for practitioners in considering how to broaden and deepen their knowledge and understanding of topic area in RME. Practitioners would benefit from exploring this documentation in relation to Judaism and so considering how best to develop and deepen their understanding of this world faith.

Practitioners should also consider the [Significant Aspects of Learning in RME](#), reflecting upon their own knowledge and understanding of Judaism in relation to these. The following questions may help practitioners to assess their own levels of understanding:

How familiar am I with the facts about Judaism?

- How familiar am I with basic Jewish beliefs and values? (monotheism, “loving your neighbour”, ...)
- How familiar am I with central Jewish practices? (Shabbat, kashrut, ...)
- How familiar am I with Jewish festival observances? (Matzah on Pesach, shofar on Rosh Hashanah, ...)
- How familiar am I with the key primary sources used by Jews? (Torah, TaNaCh, Talmud, ...)
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How confident do I feel about discussing Judaism critically?

- To what extent am I aware of the different denominations within Scotland’s Jewish community?
- How aware am I of the diversity of personal belief and practice within the Jewish community?
- To what extent do I understand key Jewish values and Jewish responses to moral issues?
- How far do I understand Jewish perspectives on human nature and the natural world?
- To what extent am I familiar with key secondary sources in relation to Judaism?
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What do I know about Jews and Judaism in Scotland?

- How much do I know about the Scottish Jewish Community? (numbers, distribution, affiliation, etc.?)
- To what extent am I aware of the experiences, both positive and negative, of Jewish people in Scotland?
- To what extent am I aware of the contribution of Judaism and Jewish people in shaping Scotland’s social, political and spiritual heritage?
- How aware am I of the history of Jewish people and the Jewish Community of Scotland, and how this affects their beliefs and attitudes? (migration, Holocaust, etc.)
- How far do I understand the spread and variety of religious belief – including Judaism – in Scotland?

How confident do I feel about my own teaching about Judaism?

- How ready am I to question my own beliefs about Judaism in order to ensure that they are accurate and not based on false presuppositions?
- How confident am I about knowing where to look for accurate and authoritative answers to questions I might have about Judaism?
- How confident am I about identifying sources that may contain political, religious, or other bias?
- How do I critically evaluate published textbooks, online and other resources in relation to Judaism?
- What principles guide my [use of visiting speakers](#) from within Judaism, and how do I ensure that such speakers are representative of the Jewish community? For example, how far does any speaker have authority to speak on behalf of the Jewish Community? What process has been used to identify a possible speaker – e.g. recommendation from another establishment?
- In what ways do I support learners to appreciate and show respect for the beliefs, values and traditions of Jewish people?
- How do I assist learners to develop their own beliefs and values through encounter with Jewish beliefs, values, practices and traditions?
- How do I guide learners towards researching questions about Judaism that I cannot immediately answer?

For each of the questions above, practitioners may wish to consider how they might develop further their understanding in relation to each prompt question:

- Where might I find this information?
- How might I approach answering this question?
- How will I evaluate different perspectives on each question?
- How will I use what I have learned to support learning and teaching?

The significant aspects of learning also explore breadth, challenge and application: How do these apply to the practitioner's knowledge and understanding of Judaism?

Breadth

- How do I support learners in engaging with a variety of sources around Judaism?
- How do I support learners in understanding and evaluating the diversity – both personal and denominational – of beliefs, practices, and traditions within Judaism in Scotland and worldwide?
- How do I support the development of learners' skills in researching, analysing, and evaluating Jewish life and belief?

Challenge

- To what extent do I engage learners with increasing complexity of sources in relation to Judaism?
- How do I nurture learners' independent research skills in relation to Judaism?
- How do I encourage learners to engage in open, honest, and respectful questioning around Judaism?

- How do I support learners in confidently but respectfully expressing their own views on aspects of Judaism?
- How do I support learners in weighing up evidence, arguments and viewpoints around Judaism?

Application

- How do I assist learners in interpreting symbolism and abstract ideas in relation to Judaism?
- How do I assist learners to imagine and consider what it is like to be Jewish, or to develop their understanding of their own experience if they are Jewish?
- How do I support learners in linking arguments and information from a variety of sources to build a fuller picture of Judaism?

These broad aspects of understanding and supporting learners to understand Judaism can be further refined by considering the key knowledge, understanding, and skills required when exploring Judaism with learners in line with the [Experiences and Outcomes for Religious and Moral Education](#). When exploring Judaism with learners, as with all aspects of RME, practitioners should consider carefully why this is a topic for exploration and why learners will benefit from learning about it. It is important that progression in RME involves supporting learners to move beyond the external expressions of religious beliefs and practices to developing their deeper understanding of the reasons behind these beliefs and practices. For example, while it is relatively simple to explore with learners how Jewish people pray, as learners progress through the Broad General Education, they should increasingly reflect upon why they pray – what praying means to them – and how learners themselves respond to the concept of prayer.

As with any world faith, it is important to avoid blanket phrases such as ‘Jews believe’, since, like all world faiths there are a great variety of beliefs, values and practices and traditions within Judaism. As learners progress in their understanding of Judaism, the subtleties and nuances of Jewish beliefs should become more central to learners’ exploration of this faith.

In the *World Religions selected for study* and the *Development of Beliefs and Values* sections of CfE RME (which should be approached in ways that are intrinsically intertwined rather than as discrete topics), there are a number of organisers as below and practitioners could consider the reflective questions linked to each of these organisers:

Beliefs

- What are the key beliefs within Judaism and what varieties of opinion exist within Judaism around these beliefs?
- What variety of belief is there in Judaism about the human condition, the natural world and ‘ultimate questions’?
- Who are the key figures in Judaism and what is their contribution to this world faith?
- What stories, images, music and poetry are linked to Judaism and how do I understand them?
- What places in Scotland, Britain and the wider world are specifically linked to Judaism?

- What artefacts are specifically linked to Judaism and how can/should these be used with learners?
- How has Judaism contributed to the development of modern Scotland?

Values and Issues

- What varieties of belief are there in Judaism about caring, sharing, fairness and cooperating?
- What different views are held within Judaism about key moral and social issues?
- How do Jewish people make moral decisions?
- How do Jewish people put their values into action in their daily lives?
- What variety of positions do Jewish people take on equality and human rights?
- How do Jewish people work to create a more just, equal, and tolerant society?
- In what ways might Jewish values challenge Scottish society?

Practices and Traditions

- In what different ways do Jewish people celebrate important times of year, events, and life-events and why do they do so?
- In what different ways do Jewish people worship and why do they do so?
- What variety of Jewish ceremonies and customs is there around the world and what are the explanations for this variety?
- How does Jewish life and belief link to Scotland's religious and cultural diversity?

Development of Beliefs and values

- How can I learn from Judaism as well as best help learners to learn about Judaism?
- How do I support learners to learn from Judaism when they explore moral issues?
- How do I support learners to develop tolerance, respect, and understanding of all religions?

How can I develop and deepen my knowledge and understanding of Judaism?

Developing your professional knowledge and understanding around Judaism can be achieved in a number of ways: For example, by:

- Building meaningful links with Jewish individuals and groups in the local community. This will result in a two-way process where establishments gain from their insight and expertise and individuals and groups develop their skills in interacting with children and young people. This community might be the local synagogue, or Jewish parents, or Jewish Student Societies in Universities and Colleges, for example. This could lead to a meaningful working relationship with the Jewish community where [visiting speakers](#) might be more readily accessed.

NB: It is important to stress that practitioners should be confident that any speaker they use is knowledgeable about Judaism and is able to provide a balanced, authoritative and objective account of Judaism. Care should be taken to ensure that the speaker approaches his/her presentation in an unbiased and balanced way and that practitioners are aware of the speaker's background and views. It is also important to stress that learners in class who are Jewish should not be used as a

matter of course as 'speakers' since this may not automatically lead to a knowledgeable presentation and may lead to learners feeling under pressure as a result. It is also important to note that it can often be the case that individual Jewish families may be wary of anything that publicly identifies them as Jewish and so caution should be exercised in this respect. In summary, advice should be sought from an authoritative Jewish organisation such as the [Scottish Council of Jewish Communities](#) who will be able to provide advice and guidance - and potentially speakers.

- Reading texts and engaging with other sources of information on Judaism.
- Reflecting on practice and [self-evaluation](#).
- Engaging with other education colleagues through visits, observation, online networks etc. and through participating in [Glow meets](#).
- Visiting [sites of religious and cultural interest](#) which are connected with Judaism.
- Researching and engaging with [religious and cultural artefacts](#) connected with Judaism.
- Critically evaluating information which can be supported by using techniques such as the [PROMPT](#) technique.
- Visiting [museums](#), galleries and other locations where items linked to Judaism may be found.

Where can I develop and deepen my knowledge and understanding of Judaism?

- Education Scotland's [Testimony](#) website
- Scottish Council of Jewish Communities: <http://www.scojec.org/>
- Educational resources: <http://www.scojec.org/resources/education.html>
- <http://judaism.about.com/od/judaismbasics/u/Judaism-101-Judaism-Basics.htm>
- <http://www.religionfacts.com/judaism>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/judaism/ataglance/glance.shtml>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/religion/judaism/>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/judaism/>
- <http://www.jewfaq.org/index.shtml>
- <http://www.aish.com/jl/>



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Denholm House, Almondvale
Business Park, Almondvale Way,
Livingston EH54 6GA

T +44 (0)141 282 5279
E joe.walker@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk

