

## CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**REPORT TO:** STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

**DATE:** 3RD MARCH 2016

**SUBJECT:** REVISED CRITERIA FOR GCSE AND GCE SPECIFICATIONS - UPDATE

### A THE REPORT

#### GCSE

- A Full Course and Short Course option will be continued
- All specifications must ensure that another religion in addition to Christianity is studied. (See attached draft specifications).
- This had presented an issue for those RC schools who currently do two RC options. RC schools will now study Judaism as the second religion. Discussion still ongoing as whether that will be 50% for each religion or as the Church would prefer 75% from the Christian Catholic perspective and 25% Judaism.
- The Welsh specifications will remain unitised:
  - Unit 1:** Religious responses to Philosophical Themes - Life and Death & Good and Evil
  - Unit 2:** Religious responses to Ethical Themes - Relationships & Human Rights
- There is a book by Hodder called *Illuminate* which will be available for the new specifications. It ties in with the English specifications but should prove useful for Welsh specifications also.

#### GCE (A and AS)

- There are two different specifications for two different countries (England and Wales).
- In England AS and A2 will be stand alone qualifications whereas in Wales AS will still feed into A2. There will be 3 separate papers in Wales and not one paper at the end as in England.
- No exam in January in England or Wales.

#### Process and Timescale

- **Revised Specifications for AS and A level** and Sample Assessment Materials were submitted to Qualification Wales for approval at the end of Nov 2015. This is Stage 2 in the process. This material is currently being translated and when this is done, these draft proposals will be put up on the WJEC website - provisional date

18th January 2016. Note - there is a draft one page summary of the AS and A level proposal currently on the WJEC website.

- The **GCSE RS** draft Specification was submitted to Qualification Wales for Stage 2 approval before Christmas and the Sample Assessment Materials will be submitted before long – WJEC are working towards the submission date of 15th January 2016. These **draft** proposals will then go to translation and will subsequently be put up on the website (hopefully by the end of January, but there is no guarantee given that the translation unit is inundated at present). On 19th January 2016 a one page draft summary of the GCSE proposal became available on the WJEC website.
- Qualification Wales will respond to the submitted specifications and advise on necessary changes. The Qualifications Development Manager at WJEC feels that Qualifications Wales may provide this feedback on the specifications before the end of January although they do reserve the right to take longer. Following the feedback from Qualification Wales, the necessary revisions will be made to the specs by WJEC and then resubmitted for approval. It is not possible to predict the timeline for making the required revisions, resubmission, actual final approval by Qualifications Wales, translation and publication of the actual specifications.
- Training programme currently programmed to take place February 2016 for A/AS level and March 2016 for GCSE at Cardiff, Carmarthen and Mold.
- Implementation from Autumn 2016.

## Issues

- The delay in approval for RS specifications - in comparison to other subjects - has an impact on the teaching of the subject. It will mean that support resources, OAMs and specimen papers are likely to be late and this has an impact on teaching and learning. Some schools start teaching GCSE courses in May and the specifications may still be in draft form. This has implications for option choices, timetabling and staffing issues, preparation of materials for teaching and availability of resources for teaching. Welsh resources likely to follow even later than English resources.
- Letters have been sent from Mary Parry to WJEC on behalf of Carmarthenshire SACRE regarding this delay in approval for RS specifications in comparison to other subjects. It asks for a delay in introduction to 2017. She has also sent the same letter to Huw Lewis, Qualifications Wales and Estyn. Mark Champion at Estyn acknowledged the email and said that he would look into it.
- WASACRE has also sent a letter to WJEC in a similar vein raising the issues and asking for a deferment of either both - or at least one - of the specifications (see attached letter).
- NAPfRE (National Advisory Panel for Religious Education) also sent a letter (see attached).
- On the recommendation of the RE Consultant to SACRE (Vicky Thomas) secondary schools have been informed of the current situation regarding specifications and timescales outlined above. They have also been informed that

on 19th January 2016 a one page draft summary of the GCSE became available on the WJEC website.

**B RECOMMENDATION**

For SACRE to note the report and for an oral update to be given at the meeting if further news is received.

**C SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- Appendix 1 WJEC GCSE Religious Studies Wales – Summary of Assessment (Draft Specifications)
- Appendix 2 WASACRE Letter to WJEC re changes to GCSE and GCE specifications
- Appendix 3 NAPfRE Letter to WJEC re changes to GCSE and GCE specifications