

Mr Gareth Pierce
 Chief Executive
 WJEC
 Cardiff CF5 2YX

Dear Mr Pierce

I am writing on behalf of the National Advisory Panel for Religious Education. Most of our members have worked as RE advisors, but now support the SACREs in most of the local authorities in Wales as subject and curriculum specialists.

The teacher representatives at our recent SACRE meetings have expressed their concerns regarding the lack of documentation, resources and guidance to help them prepare new WJEC GCE A/AS Level and GCSE Religious Studies examinations which will be taught for the first time in September 2016. We are writing to share those concerns with you and hope that you can provide us with answers or advice which will help them to prepare for the new specifications.

1. Schools are already advising Year 9 pupils on the GCSE options which will be available to them in Y10. Some schools have presumed that they can continue to offer, for example, a RS GCSE Specification B short course as an accredited course for the statutory Religious Education, and offer a RS GCSE Specification A as a full course for those pupils who want to study Religious Studies as a GCSE option. We are well aware of the success of the GCSE RS Syllabus B course in engaging our young people in religious studies.
 - a. When will schools be advised that WJEC will provide **only one** GCSE Religious Studies Syllabus from September 2016?
 - b. What is your advice to schools regarding the timetabling of a GCSE RS short course as an accreditation for the statutory Religious Education at KS4?

2. Many schools in Wales now begin the Y10 timetable in May. We understand that our teachers have not yet seen any specification, examination materials or assessment criteria to help them prepare for the new course. The training courses offered by the WJEC in March 2016 will give them very little time to prepare new teaching materials and assessment tasks and it's unlikely that publishers and resource developers will be able to respond quickly in order to provide relevant bilingual resources.
 - a. When will the revised WJEC syllabus be published (even in draft form) on the WJEC website?
 - b. What bilingual resources will be available by May 2016 for those schools who choose to start teaching the new specification with Year 10 after the Whitsun half term holiday?

3. Our RS A level teachers eagerly await the final version of the A/AS RS specification. Many are aware that they will have to teach compulsory elements which they have not taught before and are concerned that there will be little time to prepare new teaching materials and assessment tasks. In most of our school, the teachers will be trying to respond to new A/AS and GCSE specifications at the same time. Once again the lack of Welsh language resources is a matter of concern.
 - a. When will the final accredited version of the syllabus be published on the WJEC website?
 - b. What is your advice to teachers who are trying to resource and prepare for the new examination syllabus through the medium of English and Welsh?

RS results are scrutinised at SACRE meetings annually and SACRE members regularly celebrate and congratulate the sustained success of many of our Religious Education departments. As NAPfRE members we are well aware of the extra commitment made by many of our secondary teachers in ensuring that their students achieve a GCSE RS qualification. They often deliver the course under considerable time constraints and students often have to attend lunch time and after-school lessons in order to complete the course.

We appreciate the good relationship that has been developed between schools and the WJEC and hope that you can address the concerns of our teachers and SACRE members. We look forward to receiving your reply.

Diolch yn fawr
 Bethan James
 Chair of NAPfRE