

## Joint Syllabus Conference (1)

18 July 2023 1600-1730

Advisers present: Anne Andrews, Angela Hill, David Rees

Members present: Karen Butler (RBWM), Madeline Diver (BF), Sue Elbrow (S), Christine Isles (S), Ashpreet Singh (S), David Taylor (WB), Stephen Vegh(W)

Apologies: Mark Laynesmith (R)

1. The NASACRE slides about Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) were shared. AA drew attention to the fact that the ASC is responsible only for creating the syllabus, which needs to be agreed by all parties. The ASC is a legal identity, which the LA must fund and support. The SACRE hub (renamed the Joint Syllabus Conference or JSC) does not have any legal status, so all decisions must be passed back to each LA's ASC for approval. Each committee of each ASC must agree the final product before it can be published. The slides in PDF format are attached to the email accompanying these notes.
2. Each SACRE was asked if they had any more feedback on the Agreed Syllabus comparison exercise. Bracknell, Wokingham and Windsor and Maidenhead had submitted returns – the other SACREs had yet to do so. There was a degree of synergy in the responses, with a preference for more detail than the existing syllabus, but not too much prescription. Some SACREs are keener than others to see something radical, so there will need to be a balance sought between evolution and revolution in terms of content and presentation. In some of the responses there was clearly some misunderstanding among SACRE members about the role of an Agreed Syllabus, and so some notes will need to be produced to ensure that SACRE members and teachers know what a syllabus should do, and how that is different to a scheme of work. This is complicated by the fact that more syllabuses are including units of work, which begin to blur the lines.
3. Feedback from the Christian Conversation group was that they were keen to see Christianity covered through the 'Big Story' of the Bible, a bit like it is in Understanding Christianity. Discussion was had about the implications of this, as the model does not transfer well to all the other religious and non-religious tradition to be covered. There was also concern that as many schools have not purchased Understanding Christianity, a resource that does focus on the big story, they would be disadvantaged. A syllabus should not really promote any one resource, though in the non-statutory parts it may suggest or recommend. It was also suggested that the 'big story' idea could be included in a non-statutory part of the syllabus.

4. A date was then set for the next meeting: Monday 16 October at 1600. This is timed to be before most of the autumn term SACRE meetings. This will be an online meeting as usual.
5. The draft syllabus suggestions that AA had written was then presented, with an explanation of the process of creation. It started with the current syllabus, identifying the key themes and concepts which the syllabus covers. Using these concepts and themes, questions have been created for Christianity, and at the moment, generically for the other worldviews to be covered. There is no suggestions that these are the final questions, and the proposal has been made and generally accepted that each worldview should create specific questions for their tradition, ensuring therefore that questions are relevant to the tradition covered. The suggestion has been made to ensure that in each year group there is a focus on one tradition in addition to Christianity, though that does not exclude other traditions and non-religious worldviews from being included, but these would not be the focus. The aim has been to continue to have a measure of choice, while also providing more guidance. Creating a better balance between Abrahamic and Dharmic traditions is also important. So, in KS1 and LKS2 there would be an alternation between Abrahamic and Dharmic traditions, with the aim that alongside Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hindu Dharma and Sikhi would have been covered. In UKS2, although the alternation would continue, schools could choose which traditions they revisited. At this point also Humanism should be introduced. There is the option to include some thematic units if the JSC and ASCs agree. These have not yet been drafted. KS3 would focus on Buddhism and Humanism, with the option to cover Islam or the religion proposed for KS4, giving flexibility around a 3-year or 2-yr KS3. The ASCs will need to decide if they wish to promote a 2-year KS3, which Ofsted does not recommend but which many schools nevertheless implement. The ASCs will also need to decide what to do about KS4 Core (non-GCSE) and KS5 (non-A-Level). The current minimal proposal is for a wider range of Dharmic faiths to be covered in Y10 and more work on Abrahamic tradition in Y11. This could also be done through thematic units, which allow a wide range of diverse traditions to be covered, along with some big moral and ethical considerations. The draft questions also create a distinction between the disciplinary domains of RE – namely Theology, Philosophy and Human and Social Science. The disciplinary nature of RE was raised by the Ofsted RE Research Review. There are other disciplines that could be considered, but these are the three that Voluntary Controlled CE schools will need to show that they are teaching. As VC schools must follow the LAS and the CE Statement of Entitlement, creating a syllabus that allows them to do both seems wise, as there are many VC schools across the 6 LA's.
6. Generally, the proposals were well received. There is a need to ensure that the questions are appropriate to each faith, so it is suggested that the questions are shared with members of the faith traditions, and they are asked to review, make suggestions etc. There are currently three questions per religion per year group, so

that the curriculum is approximately 50% Christianity (again with the CE VC schools in mind), though additional questions and a split between core and optional could be established.

7. Budget should not be an issue if all hub contributions are up to date.

Action Points:

- AA to produce a short intro to send to members of Groups/Committees A & B
- Hub members to send draft version to all members of ASC for comments and feedback (including their own comments and feedback)
- Responses to be shared by 16 October (before if possible so AA can collate).
- SACREs to check that hub contributions are up to date. (AA to seek confirmation from Diocesan Finance Officer)