

## **Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC)**

### **Guiding principles for the Members of the Agreed Syllabus Conference**

Religion, values and ethics (RVE) is a statutory requirement of the Curriculum for Wales and is mandatory for all learners from age 3 to 16. RVE forms part of the Humanities Area. This Area encompasses geography; history; religion, values and ethics; business studies. These disciplines share many common themes, concepts and transferable skills, whilst having their own discrete body of knowledge and skills.

**Before you attend the first Agreed Syllabus Conference, please make sure that you have familiarised yourself with the recent documentation, links are provided in this document).**

The Curriculum for Wales 2022 can be found on the Hwb website-

<https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/>

The Religion, Value and Ethics Guidance, published 10<sup>th</sup> January 2022-

**The summary of legislation for Religion, Values and Ethics:**

<https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/summary-of-legislation#religion,-values-and-ethics>

**The summary of legislation for the Agreed Syllabus Guidance 2022:**

<https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/summary-of-legislation#agreed-syllabus-conferences-and-the-agreed-syllabus-for-religion,-values-and-ethics>

**The guidance for Religion, Values and Ethics:**

<https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/humanities/designing-your-curriculum#religion,-values-and-ethics-guidance>

Before the Agreed Syllabus Conference is convened, the Local Authority will have already considered the new Wales Act 2021: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asc/2021/4/schedule/2> coupled with the 1996 Act: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/schedule/31/enacted>

### **Some Notable Points:**

- The LA holds the legal duty of convening an ASC and deciding on its composition.
- Clearly defined and separate meeting to the SACRE meeting with its own agenda, minutes and membership.
- The Agreed Syllabus Conference must 'have regard' to the CfW guidance and the RVE guidance, noting the 'subsidiarity' of the CfW model.
- 'Subsidiarity' - the principle that decisions should always be taken at the lowest possible level or closest to where they will have their effect, for example in an individual learning organisation, or a local region rather than for a whole country.
- The Agreed Syllabus could be a document which refers to the RVE Guidance and the [Humanities AoLE](#) documentation (see 'Hwb').
- There is a call for a national approach to the agreed syllabus and an appetite to work together on a national syllabus to ensure consistency.
- Voluntary aided – schools can teach additional content to the agreed syllabus.

- Voluntary controlled– teach their own syllabus in line with the Church but all children if parents request that the child follows RVE – Faith schools will have to still follow the AoLE framework.
- There is no parental right to request that a child is withdrawn from RVE in the Curriculum for Wales.

### **The Role of the Agreed Syllabus Conference**

- **prepare a syllabus of Religion, Values and Ethics** to be adopted by a local education authority which may make different provision in respect of different descriptions of:
  - (a) schools maintained by the local authority
  - (b) learners
- **ensure that the syllabus must reflect** the fact that:
  - (a) **the religious traditions in Wales are in the main Christian while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Wales**
  - (b) **a range of non-religious philosophical convictions are held in Wales**
- **have regard to any guidance given by the Welsh Ministers**
- **ensure that any sub-committees appointed by the conference shall include at least one member of each of the committees constituting the conference**
- **give one vote only for each of the committees constituting the conference, upon any question to be decided by the conference or by any subcommittee thereof**
- **seek unanimous agreement upon a syllabus of RVE to be recommended for adoption by the local education authority.**

The Agreed Syllabus Conference must also **meet in public** and **be chaired by an appointee of the local authority or be permitted to choose its own Chair.**

Reconsideration of any agreed syllabus for RVE should take place **no later than five years** after the appointed day on which the local authority adopted the agreed syllabus for RVE.

### **Membership of the Agreed Syllabus Conference**

The **Agreed Syllabus Conference is a separate legal body from a Standing Advisory Council.** However, **it has the same group structure as the Standing Advisory Councils:**

- **Group A - a group of persons to represent: Christian denominations and other religions and denominations of such religions; non-religious philosophical convictions.** A local authority in Wales, in appointing such persons must take all reasonable steps to secure the outcome that the number of members appointed to the committee to represent a religion, denomination or non-religious philosophical conviction shall, so far as consistent with the efficient discharge of the committee's functions, reflect broadly the proportionate strength of that religion, denomination or non-religious philosophical conviction in the area
- **Group B - a group of persons to represent such associations representing teachers** as, in the opinion of the authority, ought to be represented, having regard to the circumstances of the area
- **Group C - a group of persons to represent the authority.** There is no legal provision for an Agreed Syllabus Conference to include co-opted members, but it can seek the advice it considers appropriate from those it considers appropriate, to inform the development of effective RVE provision in its area.

## Legislative Changes

The legislative changes in the Act relating to the roles and legal responsibilities of Agreed Syllabus Conferences and Standing Advisory Councils are:

- The Act makes it explicit that **any agreed syllabus for RVE must reflect both religious beliefs and also non-religious which are philosophical convictions within the meaning of A2P1**
- provision for **the appointment of persons who represent holders of non-religious philosophical convictions in the same way as they permit the appointment of persons who represent holders of religious beliefs.**

The Act provides for the appointment of persons who represent holders of non-religious philosophical beliefs in the same way as they permit the appointment of persons who represent holders of religious beliefs. It is a matter for the local authority to decide on the appointment of appropriate persons. The final decision on an appointment is dependent on the relevant local authority's determination that such a representative would help ensure the relevant traditions of the area are appropriately reflected. The local authority must take all reasonable steps to secure that the membership of the group is broadly proportionate to the strength of each religion, denomination, or conviction in its local area (see new subsection (6A) and (6B) of section 390 inserted by paragraph 9(8) of the Schedule.

## Aims of the agreed syllabus

The agreed syllabus is **not** designed to be a scheme of work, but rather a **helpful guide and legal reference point for schools to support them in designing an appropriate and relevant curriculum for their learners which includes RVE within the Humanities Area.** The approach of the Curriculum for Wales Framework is based on the principle of **subsidiarity** and, as such, **each agreed syllabus should recognise and reflect the autonomy of each school and setting in realising its own curriculum.** One of the intentions of this statutory RVE guidance is to provide **the right balance between the central steer of the Curriculum for Wales Framework and the requirements of local determination for RVE, as set out in agreed syllabi across Wales.** Therefore, **the statutory RVE guidance has been written as the basis for the agreed syllabus. Should a local authority wish to adopt or adapt this guidance as their agreed syllabus they may do so. It will ultimately be the responsibility of the provider to ensure that non-denominational RVE is provided pluralistically. Agreed syllabuses should recognise that while the principal religions and their traditions in Wales should be taught in all schools, other beliefs (including non-religious philosophical convictions such as humanism and atheism) are now a recognised part of life within local areas in Wales and beyond.** This is reflected in the Act which states that the agreed syllabus:

- must reflect the fact that the **religious traditions in Wales are in the main Christian while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Wales**
- must also reflect the fact that **a range of non-religious philosophical convictions are held in Wales.**

## The agreed syllabus and the Curriculum for Wales Framework

**Establishing the relationship between the agreed syllabus and the Curriculum for Wales Framework is the legal duty of Agreed Syllabus Conferences.** Local authorities, Standing Advisory Councils and Agreed Syllabus Conferences **must have regard to the Curriculum for Wales Framework, which includes this statutory RVE guidance, when developing and adopting an agreed syllabus.** The agreed syllabus is the first point of reference for RVE provision in schools and settings, therefore it is essential for the agreed syllabus to recognise and reflect the approach of the Curriculum for Wales Framework and the principles set out in this statutory RVE guidance in order to create balance and maintain coherence across the Curriculum for Wales. This statutory RVE guidance enables Agreed Syllabus Conferences to establish, with confidence, this relationship between the locally agreed syllabus and the Curriculum for Wales Framework for learners aged 3 to 16. This includes guidance to support schools and settings in ensuring that there is appropriate breadth and depth in RVE while recognising the principle of subsidiarity.

### Questions for agreed syllabus conferences to consider:

- Are religious and non-religious philosophical convictions appropriately represented?
- Would it be useful to identify faith and belief groups represented locally in the agreed syllabus?
- Would it be appropriate to offer schools and settings useful information about these faith and belief groups and how to contact them?
- Would it be helpful to include exemplar material and resources to support the locally agreed syllabus?
- How can collaboration between the Agreed Syllabus Conference and local authority schools and settings be facilitated to ensure an appropriate agreed syllabus is produced for your area?
- Are there any other groups or organisations in Wales that could support the Agreed Syllabus Conference in developing the locally agreed syllabus for your area?
- How will the locally agreed syllabus be promoted to schools and settings and other interested parties in your area?
- In addition to the statutory RVE guidance for learners from 3 to 16, do schools and settings in your area require anything further to support curriculum design for RVE in ways which support the principle of subsidiarity? For example:
  - advice on links to other Areas
  - suggestions for optional post 16 RVE
  - a glossary of terms
  - advice on engaging with sensitive issues in RVE
  - guidance on what critical, objective and pluralistic RVE might look like.

**Timeline for ASC Members:**

Timeline	Action	Responsibilities
<p><b>Early Spring Term</b></p>	<p>Local Authority <b>organise the convening of the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC).</b></p> <p>Local Authority to decide upon the <b>membership</b> of the Agreed Syllabus Conference, in line with the group structure outlined above. Please note that there needs to be <b>‘non-religious philosophical conviction’</b> representation within group A membership. If the Local Authority agrees to use the members of SACRE gaps in membership may need to be filled for the ASC to ensure diversity.</p> <p>Local Authority to <b>organise a Chair and Clerk</b> for the ASC meeting(s).</p> <p>Local Authority to <b>organise a date</b> for the ASC meeting the Spring Term.</p> <p>Local Authority to organise <b>the invitations to be sent</b> out to ASC members with Agenda. Clerk to sends out a proposed of meeting date/s to all ASC members with Agenda and link to the RVE guidance and other relevant materials.</p> <p><b>Notice to stakeholders given, for openness and transparency.</b> This can be done via <b>publication of the agenda on Council websites.</b></p>	<p>Local Authority</p> <p>Local Authority to establish the composition of the 'ASC', Adviser to give guidance if required</p> <p>Local Authority to set up Chair and Clerk</p> <p>Local Authority to establish the date for the first ASC meeting with Chair, Clerk and Adviser.</p> <p>Local Authority to send out invitations with Agenda and links (Adviser to advise/write and submit to Chair for approval, Clerk to send to ASC membership)</p> <p>Local Authority – ICT/Website department</p>
<p><b>Prior to First Meeting</b></p>	<p><b>ASC members to confirm their attendance/give their apologies</b> for their attendance at the ASC meeting, to the Clerk of the ASC.</p> <p><b>ASC members to read through the Agenda and supporting documents/materials.</b></p> <p><b>ASC members to inform ASC Clerk, prior to meeting, of any questions or other business for the first ASC meeting.</b></p>	<p><b>ASC Members</b></p> <p><b>ASC Members</b></p> <p><b>ASC Members</b></p>



	(Please note the impact of the council elections on available dates etc.)	Copy of Agreed Syllabus for consideration by the Local Authority to be sent by the Chair/Clerk.
April-July 2022	<p><b>Local Authority to discuss and consider the Agreed Syllabus presented by the ASC.</b></p> <p>Options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to adopt Agreed Syllabus fully</li> <li>• to make amendments to the Agreed Syllabus</li> <li>• To make additions to the Agreed Syllabus</li> </ul> <p>For some Local Authorities, their protocol will require the Agreed Syllabus (presented by the ASC) to go through checks with the full council or a committee.</p> <p><b>There may be further amendments for the ASC to consider</b> if the Local Authority require changes/omissions or amendments.</p> <p><b>Supplementary ASC meetings may be required</b> following the Local Authorities consideration of the ASC Agreed Syllabus.</p>	<p>Local Authority to consider the Agreed Syllabus presented by ASC for adoption.</p> <p>Initiations, agendas and additional ASC meetings may be required (Chair, Clerk and Adviser).  <b>ASC Members</b> may need to attend additional ASC meetings.</p>
Post Agreed Syllabus Conferences	<p><b>Local Authority to adopt the Agreed Syllabus</b> and ensure it is available to the Minister for Education, schools, ESTYN, CSC, WASACRE and other relevant organisations.</p> <p>Translation will be required.</p>	<p>For the Local Authority to publish the Locally Agreed Syllabus.</p> <p>The Local Authority Translation Department.</p>
September 2022	<p><b>For the locally Agreed Syllabus to be implemented from nurseries to Year 6.</b></p> <p><b>Year 7 from 2022, or years 7 and 8 in 2023 in some schools.</b></p> <p><b>2023 – nurseries, primary settings and Y7 &amp; Y8</b></p> <p><b>2024 - nurseries, primary settings and Y7 – Y9</b></p> <p><b>2025 - nurseries, primary settings and Y7 - Y10</b></p> <p><b>2026 - nurseries, primary settings and Y7 – Y11</b></p>	<p>Local Authority, SACRE/SAC, school SLT and school practitioners.</p>
Spring/Summer 2027	<p>The Agreed Syllabus will need to <b>be reviewed after 5 years.</b></p> <p>An ASC will need to be convened once more.</p>	<p>Local Authority to convene an ASC and organise the ASC membership composition.  <b>ASC members.</b></p>

## **Other things to consider:**

### **Legacy Agreed Syllabus Review**

The Local Authority may need to include a review of the **current** agreed syllabus for learners who are educated under the **legacy curriculum**. This is only necessary if a recent review has not taken place within the last five years. A separate agenda, minutes are required as it needs, legally, to be a separate ASC meeting. In practice, the **two ASC meetings** (for legacy and new Agreed Syllabus discussions) can take place on the same day, with the same membership, but with an official break in between them and running them as two separate meetings. **As ASC members you may well be asked to attend both sessions, if there is a 'legacy' Agreed Syllabus to re-adopt, if it hasn't been done in the since February 2017.**

### **Post 16**

It is currently unclear as to when RE/RVE becomes optional for post 16? The Agreed Syllabus will need to outline this. When is compulsory RE being removed and optional implemented in all educational settings? 2022? Guidance for Post 16 – Does this need to be added to the Agreed Syllabus? We are awaiting clarification on this, but the Local Authorities legal Team may wish to explore this prior to the first ASC meeting. So that the ASC members can be clear of what to include in the Agreed Syllabus from the first meeting.

### **Curriculum Time**

The Curriculum for Wales framework and the RVE Guidance does not stipulate how much curriculum time should be considered for RVE, rather that it is statutory. How will SACREs/SACs and Estyn determine and monitor the provision for statutory RVE? Does the ASC need to consider this for their Agreed Syllabus?

### **Hayley Jones**

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