



By email

Revd. Canon Evans
The Chair of WASACRE

cymwysterau.cymru

qualifications.wales

10 December 2024

Dear Revd. Canon Evans,

Qualifications Wales letter to Chair of WASACRE in relation to GCSE Religious Studies

I recognise that the delay in the publication of a final specification for GCSE Religious Studies has met with some concern from some of the attendees at WASACRE's autumn conference recently.

Qualifications Wales published approval criteria for new made-for-Wales GCSEs including GCSE Religious Studies, in June 2023. The awarding body, WJEC, have to comply with the approval criteria in developing the GCSE qualifications, before we can approve WJEC's qualification specification. GCSE Religious Studies is part of wave 1 of the new made-for-Wales GCSEs, which means that these subjects will be made available for first teaching from September 2025, wave 2 GCSEs will be made available for first teaching from September 2026. WJEC published the final specifications for the majority of wave 1 subjects in September, but were only able to publish a draft specification for GCSE Religious Studies. The final specification has now been published by WJEC on 6 December 2024.

I felt it would be helpful to explain some of the reasons why the Religious Studies specification is being published later than other wave 1 subjects, such as History and Geography.

During early iterations of the draft qualification in Spring 2024, there was more work than anticipated for WJEC to devise subject content that balanced the needs of flexibility for schools (in line with the aspirations of the Curriculum for Wales) and clarity of requirements for assessment. As a result, there was a need for several re-drafts of the specification content over Summer 2024 which meant that we were unable to progress the approval of this qualification, and WJEC were unable to progress with developing the sample assessment materials.

There was also more work than anticipated for WJEC in devising valid subject content on non-religious beliefs in line with Qualifications Wales approval criteria, which also had a knock-on effect to the development of sample assessment materials. There was also careful consideration of how to balance the views of different stakeholder groups.

As non-exam assessment (previously known as coursework) has not been an aspect of GCSE Religious Studies for many years, there were challenges in devising valid assessments and identifying the relevant skills for the subject in line with the new assessment objectives, which are part of the approval criteria.

Qualifications Wales

Q2 Building, Pencarn Lane
Imperial Park,
Newport
NP10 8AR
☎ 01633 373 222



Cymwysterau Cymru

Adeilad Q2, Lôn Pencarn
Parc Imperial,
Casnewydd
NP10 8AR
☎ 01633 373 222

Between April and November 2024, the above issues necessitated several re-drafts of the specification and sample assessment materials which had to be submitted to us on multiple occasions before we were content that they met the requirements of the approval criteria. Regular meetings took place between us and WJEC to resolve these difficulties. We are expecting all of the sample assessment materials to be available in January 2025, and whilst we understand that teachers may have preferred earlier sight of these documents, it will still allow teachers to prepare for teaching this engaging new qualification. WJEC are also planning professional learning sessions to support teachers in delivering GCSE Religious Studies.

I hope that this letter has been helpful in setting out the background for the delay with the new GCSE Religious Studies. Please let me know whether you would like to meet to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely,



Philip Blaker
Chief Executive