

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

Religious Education

Junior Certificate Syllabus

ordinary and higher levels

final draft for agreement

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confidential

Table of Contents

Title	page no.
Rationale	3
Religious Education for Junior Certificate	4
Aims	5
Syllabus content	6
Section A: Communities of Faith	7
Section B: Foundations of Religion - Christianity	14
Section C: Foundations of Religion - Major World Religions	20
Section D: The Question of Faith	26
Section E : The Celebration of Faith	32
Section F: The Moral Challenge	38
Assessment	44

Religious Education in the curriculum; an educational rationale

The N.C.C.A. works from the following aim of education which has been accepted by successive Ministers for Education.

"The general aim of education is to contribute towards the development of all aspects of the people, including aesthetic, creative, critical, cultural, emotional, intellectual, moral, physical, political, social and spiritual development for personal and family life, for working life, for living in the community and for leisure."

It follows that the curriculum of the school should reflect and make provision for the realisation of these aims.

In the context of this definition, human development is the development of the awareness of self as separate and unique with the capacity for reflection, imagination and creativity; open to ideas of truth, goodness, and beauty. From earliest times, the experience of the spiritual and the human search for meaning have frequently found expression in a religious interpretation of life. The history of humanity has been indelibly marked by the contributions of religious traditions. In Ireland, Christianity is part of our rich cultural heritage and has played a significant role in shaping our vision of ourselves, our world and our relationships with others. However, effective functioning in an increasingly complex culture demands that peoples have an understanding of a variety of religious traditions and an appreciation of the richness of the major religious traditions encountered not just in Ireland, but in Europe and in the wider global context. Increasingly, modern culture also calls for engagement with the secular response to human experience.

While it is the concern of the whole curriculum built around the principles of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes, to promote personal growth and to facilitate the spiritual development of students, Religious Education is well placed to provide students with opportunities for reflection on human experience as well as for understanding and interpretation of that experience. Such opportunities encourage the students' participation in their own conscious and critical development.

Religious Education should ensure that students are exposed to a broad range of religious traditions and to the non-religious interpretation of life. It has a particular role to play in the curriculum in the promotion of tolerance and mutual understanding. It seeks to develop in students the skills needed to engage in meaningful dialogue with those of other, or of no, religious traditions.

Religious Education, in offering opportunities to develop an informed and critical understanding of the Christian tradition in its historical origins and cultural and social expressions, should be part of a curriculum which seeks to promote the critical and cultural development of the person in his or her social and personal contexts.

Religious Education makes a significant contribution to a curriculum which seeks to provide for the moral development of students. It introduces a variety of ethical codes and norms for behaviour. Students are encouraged to engage critically with these moral systems in an effort to arrive at a thought - through moral stance which will serve as a foundation for the decisions they will face as adults and for the patterns of behaviour and commitment which will mark how they will relate to their local communities and to the world in general.

In summary, Religious Education can justly claim an integral part of any curriculum which aims to promote the holistic development of the person in the light of the stated aim of education. The assessment and certification of an R.E. syllabus at national level would provide students and society with certificated statements of achievement based on the knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes implicit in that syllabus.

Religious Education for Junior Certificate

The aim of Junior Cycle Religious Education is to provide students with a framework for encountering and engaging with the variety of religious traditions in Ireland and elsewhere. Such a framework would also prepare students for the Leaving Certificate course in Religious Education.

The syllabus for Junior Certificate, in common with the range of subjects offered at this level, invites the students to reflect on their own experiences. Thus, the students' own experience of religion, their commitment to a particular religious tradition, and/or to an ongoing search for meaning, will be encouraged and supported.

Junior Cycle Religious Education seeks to promote an understanding and appreciation of why people believe as well as tolerance and respect for the values and beliefs of all. The syllabus is built around a framework of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes. As part of a programme of preparation for the responsibilities of citizenship, the course makes particular reference to the Christian tradition, acknowledging the unique role of this tradition and its denominational expressions in Irish life.