

Religious Studies

SUBJECT EXPERT GROUP RESPONSE TO THE SECTOR

The Religious Studies Subject Expert Group (SEG) would like to thank those who took the time to review the Religious Studies products. We received six responses to the questionnaire.

It was encouraging to read that there was general confidence in, and support for, the new standards and assessment activities.

Your feedback indicated a need for more clarification on specific products, and we heard that you wanted professional learning and development to help unpack the standards. You also highlighted the need for support materials to avoid ambiguity when using terms and exploring concepts.

Three themes were identified in the feedback.

Theme One

Respondents asked for further clarification of explanations and supporting documents

Response

The mini-pilot with selected schools in 2021 will test how these new standards and associated resources will work in practice. The schools involved in the mini-pilot will be provided further support and guidance during the pilot. The new Teaching, Learning and Assessment Guide will be made available and it will contain a glossary of common assessment words and terms, and guidance on how to unpack each standard. During the mini-pilot, exemplars of student work will be identified and this will provide a helpful framework for schools to see how others were able to successfully apply the assessments in their local contexts.

Theme Two

Respondents expressed uncertainty about their ability to relate to or deliver through some of the contexts in the draft Assessment Activities

Response

Three different activities were provided so that schools have options for contextualising their assessment. All schools and teachers should be able to see at least one Assessment Activity per standard that they are able to engage with. Due to the deliberately varied nature of the options, some may find a particular activity more accessible or more challenging.

The SEG recognises that schools will bring their local context into their programme planning. These activities allow students to reflect on their local communities, and students are encouraged to expand their horizons by learning about different faiths. The SEG was excited by the opportunity to delve into the connections between religions and the history of Aotearoa New Zealand. The intention is that embedding the context of iwi and tauiwi would enrich the experience of learners and the diversity of discussions in the classroom.

Theme Three

Respondents questioned the balance of teaching and learning: the time spent on skills compared to content knowledge needed for assessment.

Response

The new Achievement Standards and Assessment Activities were developed with the aims for the Review of Achievement Standards (RAS) at the forefront, which is to encourage 'curriculum first' in teaching and learning, rather than designing courses based around assessment. The intention is that content and the Social Sciences skills needed to engage with assessment will be taught holistically. Further guidance for teachers around this may be required.

While there may be a need to refresh local curricula to reflect new ideas in these standards, our thinking is this needs to be built on the special character curricula or bodies of knowledge already being referenced. Schools should still be able to see a way to assess much of their core content with these materials. This will be tested further through the mini-pilot to ensure the materials support 'curriculum first' planning. Exemplar course outlines have been created to show how schools can balance different topics throughout the year and have been designed to reflect the various curricula that schools base their courses on.