



Department  
for Education

**Consultation Response Form**

**Consultation closing date: 29 December 2014**

**Your comments must reach us by that date**

**Reformed GCSE and A level subject content  
consultation for religious studies GCSE and  
A level**

**If you would prefer to respond online to this consultation please use the following link: <https://www.education.gov.uk/consultations>**

In July and September this year, the Department consulted on content for a number of subjects, for first teaching in 2016.

We are now seeking views on Religious Studies GCSE and A level subject content, the last remaining subject for first teaching in 2016.

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

If you want all, or any part, of your response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.

If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it to be confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department will process your personal data (name and address and any other identifying material) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

<b>Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reason for confidentiality:	

Name: Pavan Dhaliwal	
Please tick if you are responding on behalf of your organisation.	x
Name of Organisation (if applicable): British Humanist Association	
Address: 39 Moreland Street, London EC1V 8BB	

If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the Ministerial and Public Communications Division by e-mail: [consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk) or by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the Department's ['Contact Us'](#) page.

Please insert an 'x' into one of the following boxes which best describes you as a respondent.

<input type="checkbox"/> Academies	<input type="checkbox"/> Awarding organisations	<input type="checkbox"/> Colleges
<input type="checkbox"/> Employers/business sector	<input type="checkbox"/> Further education	<input type="checkbox"/> Headteachers
<input type="checkbox"/> Higher education	<input type="checkbox"/> Local authorities	<input type="checkbox"/> Organisations representing school teachers and lecturers
<input type="checkbox"/> Parents	<input type="checkbox"/> Schools	<input type="checkbox"/> School governors
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Subject associations	<input type="checkbox"/> Teachers	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people

<p>Please Specify:</p> <p>The British Humanist Association is the national charity working on behalf of non-religious people who seek to live ethical and fulfilling lives on the basis of reason and humanity. We promote Humanism, support and represent the non-religious, and promote a secular state and equal treatment in law and policy of everyone, regardless of religion or belief. Founded in 1896, we have around 30,000 members and supporters, and over 70 local and special interest affiliates.</p> <p>The BHA has a long history of work in education, children's rights and equality, with expertise in the 'religion or belief' strand. We have been involved in policy development around RE for over 60 years. We are a founding member of the RE Council for England and Wales, and our Chief Executive has been a Trustee of that</p>
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organisation since 2006. In recent years, the BHA has also been on the Department for Education steering groups which developed the 2004 non-statutory national framework (to which we gave our named support); the non-statutory programmes of study and attainment targets for key stages 3-5 in 2007; the abandoned level descriptions and key stage 1/2 non-statutory programme of learning in 2010; and the 2010 non-statutory guidance. We were also on the steering group of the 2013 RE Subject Review. Andrew Copson has also sat on similar bodies with Ofsted, Ofqual and the QCDA. We helped to develop Ofsted's guidance on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

We provide materials and advice to parents, governors, students, teachers and academics, for example through <http://www.humanismforschools.org.uk/> and our school volunteers programme. We have made detailed responses to all recent reviews of the school curriculum, and submit memoranda of evidence to parliamentary select committees on a range of education issues.

Our support for RE is also reflected by the fact that many standing advisory councils on RE (SACREs) and agreed syllabus conferences (ASCs) have had humanist representatives (in some cases for decades), including as Chairs and Vice-Chairs. Recent years have seen a rise in the number of humanists who are on SACREs, as documents such as the 2010 RE guidance and 2013 national framework have referred to teaching about non-religious beliefs such as Humanism. As a result almost six out of seven English SACREs now have a humanist representative.

## **Summary**

The consultation document states that 'The content... sets out the expectation that students recognise the diverse range of religious and non-religious beliefs represented in Great Britain... This will help to ensure that students develop respect and tolerance for those with different religions and beliefs.' But it is hard to see how this can be achieved if the requirement throughout is to study one or two religions and there is no option to study non-religious worldviews. It seems to us that the proposed subject content makes it impossible for this expectation to be met.

We strongly believe that that non-religious worldviews and Humanism should be included in the subject content to the same extent as each of the principal religions, with the caveats that it should only be possible to study one non-religious worldview and it should not be possible to study non-religious worldviews for the entirety of a qualification. This is because in practice Humanism is the only non-religious worldview that is significantly common to merit an annex in its own right, and we believe all young people should learn about a range of religions and non-religious worldviews.

Such inclusion is important because it logically follows from (and indeed strengthens) all contemporary justifications for the subject; it reflects widespread

existing practice; it helps the subject stay relevant to young people; it matches international agreements and standards; and it helps schools meet the Independent School Standards.

We set out at length why we believe non-religious worldviews should be included in the criteria and why an annex on Humanism should be added at GCSE level. We suggest what we would want to see changed, in practice, outline the merits of different choices of terminology, and explain what we mean by 'worldview'.

We are submitting four annexes to this consultation response that should be read alongside it:

1. An outline of why Humanism is included in Religious Education (in more detail)
2. A demonstration of the widespread support for the study of Humanism (including a widely signed letter and further messages of support)
3. Changes we would want to see to the subject content (in detail)
4. What a Part One annex on Humanism might look like

We will also be responding to Ofqual's consultation, calling for similar changes to ensure the assessment objectives are inclusive in their language.

1 Is the revised GCSE content in religious studies appropriate? Please consider whether:

- there is a suitable level of challenge
- the content reflects what students need to know in order to progress to further academic and vocational education
- the amount of content in the qualification is appropriate and comparable to other reformed GCSEs and, if not, whether you have any suggestions for removing or adding content
- the number of optional pathways through the qualification is suitable and these present comparable levels of challenge
- there is the right balance between breadth and depth of study.

Please provide evidence to support your response.

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments:

### **Summary**

We believe that non-religious worldviews and Humanism should be included in the subject content to the same extent as each of the principal religions, with the proviso that any systematic study of a non-religious worldview in either part one or part two should be alongside the systematic study of a religion (i.e. it should not be possible to systematically study two non-religious worldviews in either part, nor should it be possible to only study one non-religious worldview in part two).

This is because in practice there is only one non-religious worldview that is sufficiently common to merit an annex in its own right, namely Humanism; and we strongly support young people learning about a broad range of religions and non-religious worldviews and would not want it to be possible for non-religious worldviews to be the only area of study.

Such inclusion is important because it logically follows from (and indeed strengthens) all contemporary justifications for the subject; it reflects existing practice by schools, locally agreed syllabuses, the REC and RE professionals more generally; it helps the subject stay relevant to young people, many of whom are not religious; it matches international agreements on the study of religions and non-religious worldviews; and it helps schools meet the Independent School Standards' requirement to 'actively promote the fundamental British values of... mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.'

In what follows we have set out at length why we believe non-religious worldviews should be included in the subject content and why an annex on Humanism should be added. We have made specific suggestions as to what we would want to see changed, in practice, and how the language can be changed to be inclusive. We have also defined what we mean by 'worldview', and discussed the merits of different choices of terminology (i.e. 'beliefs' vs 'non-religious worldviews'). And we have welcomed the requirement for schools to study at least two religions.

We will also be responding to Ofqual's consultation, calling for similar changes to ensure the assessment objectives are inclusive in their language.

### **Why non-religious worldviews and Humanism should be included**

We have provided, as annex 1 to this submission, a three page briefing setting out the reasons why Humanism is included in Religious Education, but in summary:

- All the usual contemporary justifications for the subject of RE in the school

curriculum – its contribution to social cohesion and mutual understanding, its presentation of a range of answers to questions of meaning and purpose, and its role in the search for personal identity and values – are fatally undermined without the inclusion of humanist perspectives and non-religious students.

- Humanism has long been part of Religious Education and the Religious Education Council has long supported this inclusion. Successive Government documents have recommended the inclusion of non-religious worldviews such as Humanism, and the 2013 Curriculum Framework is as inclusive of teaching about non-religious worldviews as it is of teaching about religions.<sup>1</sup> This is also reflected in locally agreed syllabuses, the vast majority of which include the teaching of Humanism with many having extensive modules dedicated to its study. The REC's vision is that 'Every young person experiences a personally inspiring and academically rigorous education in religious and non-religious worldviews'.<sup>2</sup>
- It is vital that Religious Education remains relevant to young people and with surveys suggesting that between 31% and 69% are not religious,<sup>3</sup> this means including non-religious worldviews. RE struggles to engage these young people when their beliefs are excluded.
- International agreements all recommend the inclusion of non-religious worldviews alongside religious beliefs and in fact the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief specifically recommended it in her last report on the UK.<sup>4</sup>
- The BHA was a founder member of and has always played an active part in the RE Council including at the Board level and has been involved in the steering groups of all relevant government and quango reviews for the last decade. Almost six out of seven English SACREs include a humanist – more than include many representatives of religions that *are* studied.
- The Independent School Standards require that independent schools, Academies and Free Schools 'actively promote the fundamental British

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<sup>1</sup> *A Curriculum Framework for Religious Education in England*, The Religious Education Council of England and Wales, 23 October 2014: <http://resubjectreview.recouncil.org.uk/re-review-report>  
See also 'New RE subject framework makes clear: schools should put non-religious beliefs on equal footing', British Humanist Association, 23 October 2014: <https://humanism.org.uk/2013/10/23/new-re-subject-framework-makes-clear-schools-put-non-religious-beliefs-equal-footing/>

<sup>2</sup> *Aims, Vision and Values*, Religious Education Council for England and Wales: <http://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/about/how-the-rec-works/aims-vision-and-values>

<sup>3</sup> The 2011 Census found 31% of 0-19 year olds having no religion, with a further 8% not stated. The 2013 *British Social Attitudes Survey* records 69% of 15-24 year olds as not belonging to any religion: see the British Social Attitudes Information System, with cross-tabs by age: [http://www.britisocat.com/BodyTwoCol\\_rpt.aspx?control=CCESDMarginals&MapID=RELIGION&SeriesID=12](http://www.britisocat.com/BodyTwoCol_rpt.aspx?control=CCESDMarginals&MapID=RELIGION&SeriesID=12)

<sup>4</sup> A/HRC/7/10/Add.3 *Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Asma Jahangir into the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (June 2007)*, United Nations Human Rights Council, (amongst others) paragraph 69, 7 February 2008: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/Visits.aspx>

values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.<sup>5</sup> Departmental advice recommends that schools meet this standard by using ‘teaching resources from a wide variety of sources to help pupils understand a range of faiths, and beliefs such as atheism and humanism.’<sup>6</sup>

It logically follows that Humanism should also be included in the Religious Studies subject content. While the few sentences that do refer to non-religious beliefs are a start, they go nowhere near far enough: if RE/RS is the logical place on the current curriculum for the study of non-religious worldviews (which it is), then it plainly follows that Humanism should be included at least to the same extent as some of the principal religions. Set against all of these reasons, any implications inferred from the subject being called ‘Religious Studies’ pale into insignificance.

There is widespread support for inclusion of an annex on Humanism, both within the profession and amongst other relevant academics. A letter we organised calling for it to be possible to systematically study non-religious worldviews at both GCSE and A level, and for the introduction of an annex on Humanism, has been widely signed by over 100 philosophers (including moral philosophers, philosophers of religion and experts on Humanism), RE professors, consultants, advisors and teachers, and children’s authors, including some 25 professors of philosophy; Keith Ward, Regius Professor Emeritus of Divinity at the University of Oxford; Professor Brian Gates, former Chair of the REC (2002-11); Professor Trevor Cooling, Director of National Institute for Christian Education Research; Professor Bob Jackson, former Director of the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit (1994-2012); Dr Jacqueline Watson, former Director of the Centre for Spirituality and Religion in Education (2012-14); Alan Brine, former HMI and National Lead for Religious Education within Ofsted (2007-14); and Mark Chater, former Senior Adviser for RE, Qualifications & Curriculum Development Agency (2006-10).

This letter is provided as annex 2 to this response. Our conversations with philosophers, teachers, parents and pupils have also generated a range of supportive reactions, which we have also included in that annex. One student told us:

*‘I’m in year twelve so have just finished my GCSEs. I enjoyed Religious Education very much in lower school, however I felt the curriculum was very limited in its exploration of non-religious viewpoints. This was the main reason for why I decided not to take Religious Studies at GCSE. I think that RS is a very important subject and is key in helping children understand the*

<sup>5</sup> The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2014/2374/made>

<sup>6</sup> *Improving the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils* Departmental advice for independent schools, academies and free schools, Department for Education, November 2013: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-the-smsc-development-of-pupils-in-independent-schools>

*world and help them develop into understanding and respectful adults. However as a humanist I think that the GCSE RS course does not include my views and the views of many other atheists and humanists wanting to study religion and we feel excluded by the lack of education about our beliefs. RS needs to be taught to my generation but the current curriculum is just not representative of our beliefs today.'*

In other words, excluding Humanism from RS GCSE leads to fewer young people studying religion, as well as non-religious worldviews.

Furthermore, the RE Council for England and Wales's position is that '*The REC Board has agreed unanimously that the optional systematic study of a non-religious worldview should be introduced at GCSE level. We want to promote a rigorous and inclusive study of religions and beliefs that is relevant and challenging for young people of all faiths and none.*'<sup>7</sup> It sees '*fail[ure] to include the option for systematic study of a non-religious worldview in parallel with study of a religion... as unacceptable in relation to the RE Review, the REC's vision and on general educational grounds*'.

The National Association of Teachers of Religious Education's Executive's position is similarly that there should be the addition of an annex on non-religious worldviews.

This question asks us to consider a number of issues in forming our response. Our views on these are:

- there is a suitable level of challenge: we would say that there is not, as it is hard to see how a qualification can be said to be sufficiently robust and rigorous when it goes against the overwhelming consensus of subject professionals in marginalising a large section of the field of study to which it belongs.
- the content reflects what students need to know in order to progress to further academic and vocational education: we would say that it does not, as higher education courses are themselves increasingly inclusive of non-religious worldviews, through for example the Nonreligion and Secularity Research Network; while locally agreed syllabuses and schools are increasingly inclusive of non-religious worldviews, a trend that is if anything only accelerating since the publication of the 2013 framework – and therefore students who are future teachers are not being prepared for the range of beliefs that they themselves would have to teach.
- the amount of content in the qualification is appropriate and comparable to other reformed GCSEs and, if not, whether you have any suggestions for

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<sup>7</sup> 'Religious Education Council statement on exam reform consultation', Religious Education Council for England and Wales, 7 November 2014: <http://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/educators/news/2014-11-07/religious-education-council-statement-on-exam-reform-consultation>

removing or adding content: for all the reasons we have given, the amount of content is not appropriate. Non-religious worldviews should be included throughout and an annex on Humanism should be added.

- there is the right balance between breadth and depth of study: we would say that there is insufficient breadth and depth – insufficient breadth in essentially omitting the second biggest belief group, and insufficient depth in that to the extent that that group is included, it is to a much shallower extent than the principal religions.

For reasons of relevance to young people, coherence (both with the 2013 framework and internally), robustness and academic rigour, and tolerance of those of all faiths and none, it is vital that there is added an annex on Humanism.

### **The place of non-religious worldviews and Humanism in Part One**

We firmly believe that it should be possible for students, should they wish to do so, to systematically study a non-religious worldview alongside a religion; and that there should be an annex on Humanism placed alongside the seven annexes on the principal religions. We think that this is vital for all the reasons set out above.

#### What we want to see change, in practice

For the full course, we would want the programme of study amended to specify the study of 'two religions or one religion and one non-religious worldview', either 'shared equally between the two religions or one religion and one non-religious worldview', or giving more time to 'a primary religion or non-religious worldview' and less time to a 'second religion or first non-religious worldview'.

For the short course, we would similarly want specifications to offer the opportunity to either 'two religions or one religion and one non-religious worldview'.

We do not see the need to allow for the study of two non-religious worldviews as in practice there is only one non-religious worldview that is significantly common to merit an annex in its own right, namely Humanism. We shall return to this point later on.

Similarly, we would want to see the four (study of religion) topics in the subject content amended to be more inclusive in their language. In annex 3 we have specified what this text might look like.

Finally, we are submitting as annex 4 to this consultation response an 'annex on Humanism' that we would want to see sit alongside the seven annexes on the principal religions.

#### What we mean by 'worldview'

When we use the term ‘worldview’, we mean a moral and ethical framework that seeks to answer the major questions of meaning and purpose. A religious worldview is a worldview that involves faith or belief in the supernatural. A non-religious worldview is a worldview that rejects faith and belief in the supernatural.

In our response to the ongoing consultation on humanist marriages, following on from the requirement in the Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Act 2013 for the Government to consult on the introduction of belief-based marriages, we wrote the following:

*The Act specifies that any qualifying organisation [to perform belief-based marriages] must advance a ‘system of non-religious beliefs which relate to morality or ethics’.*

(i) a ‘system’

*The formula in the Act might on a wide reading admit mere codes of conduct unrelated to any existential belief. However, the requirement for a ‘system’ of beliefs presumably requires more than merely the holding of an assortment of beliefs: they must be integrated. There is an echo here of the case law under the Human Rights Act of beliefs needing to ‘attain a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance’<sup>8</sup>.*

*In a related legal context, we have previously<sup>9</sup> drawn attention to the fact that both religious and non-religious ‘lifestances’ (roughly equivalent to ‘systems of belief’) invariably have two elements:*

- *They entail convictions about the nature of the world we live in and of human life.*
- *They draw implications for the way we live – typically establishing a basis of morality and values.*

*These interdependent elements constitute a system.*

(ii) ‘non-religious’

*A ‘belief’ in law may be ‘non-religious’ in one of two ways:*

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<sup>8</sup> ‘In its ordinary meaning the word ‘convictions’, taken on its own, is not synonymous with the words ‘opinions’ and ‘ideas’, such as are utilised in Article 10 (art. 10) of the Convention, which guarantees freedom of expression; it is more akin to the term ‘beliefs’ (in the French text: ‘convictions’) appearing in Article 9 (art. 9) – which guarantees freedom of thought, conscience and religion – and denotes views that attain a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance.’ . . . [philosophical convictions] ‘denotes, in the Court’s opinion, such convictions as are worthy of respect in a ‘democratic society’ and are not incompatible with human dignity.’ – Campbell and Cosans v. UK: (1982), 4 EHRR 293 p304, para 36 and p305, para 36)

<sup>9</sup> Religion and Non-religious Beliefs in Charity Law, August 2007: available at <http://david-pollock.org.uk/religion/religion-and-non-religious-beliefs-in-charity-law/>

- *specifically non-religious (i.e. incompatible with religion e.g. Humanism) or*
- *non-religious only in the neutral sense that it has no relation to religion.*

*An example of the latter would be strongly held and coherent beliefs on 'green' issues (but see below). Another might be a system of beliefs arising from the philosophy of (say) Ayn Rand.*

Following on from what we wrote in response to that consultation, we think the term 'worldview', as we have defined it, does not encapsulate everything that could be classified as a 'belief' in equality and human rights law, but means only moral and ethical frameworks that are specifically religious or specifically non-religious. Furthermore, only the six principal religious worldviews and Humanism merit annexes. We now turn to the question of why that is.

#### Why an annex on Humanism specifically?

There are two reasons why it is logical and coherent that Humanism is the exemplar of a non-religious worldview that is included with an annex alongside the main world religions.

The first is that it is the only such worldview that is clearly articulated and the subject of a sufficient body of writing suitable for use in schools.

The second is that it is the (explicit or implicit) worldview of the great majority of non-religious people in England.<sup>10</sup> Not every person who meets the definition of a humanist would refer to themselves as such and some will even be unfamiliar with the term. This reflects the fact that non-religious people are not compelled by their beliefs to engage in any sort of formal practice or observance, join any organisation or even identify with any particular creed at all. This difference between religions and non-religious worldviews should not mask the fact that the humanist outlook on life is widespread in Britain today, much more so than all the minority religions combined.

It is hard to see what other non-religious worldviews would merit an annex, given the fact that amongst the religions, only the six principal religions currently have an annex.

Atheism and agnosticism are not worldviews but positions merely on the existence of god. They are not equivalent to religions but to theism. Advocating for atheism to

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, this 2006 Ipsos MORI survey that found that 36% of the population meets the definition of being a humanist, with the figures being even higher amongst the young: <https://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/190/Humanist-Beliefs.aspx>

have an annex is equivalent to advocating for theism to have an annex. Besides, humanists are by definition atheists or agnostics and so both terms would be discussed as part of the systematic study of Humanism.

Secularism is not a worldview but a political position, equivalent to (for example) feminism.

Non-theistic religions such as some versions of Buddhism are religions and at any rate Buddhism is already included.

New religious movements (popularly known as cults) should not have annexes not because they are not religions but due to their lack of widespread support. (Similarly, religions such as Jainism, the Bahá'í Faith, Zoroastrianism, paganism and Rastafarianism do not have annexes.) Extending the subject content to cover non-religious worldviews and adding an annex on Humanism does not make it any more likely that such beliefs will be studied.

'Beliefs' such as nihilism, Confucianism and (the philosophical aspects of) Marxism are worldviews but (like many reputable but minor religions) not widespread enough to merit annexes, given the current threshold that has been adopted.

Philosophical convictions on a narrow range of issues, such as vegetarianism, are 'beliefs' but not worldviews. They might meet the definition of a 'belief' under equality and human rights legislation but they would not merit an annex as they are not moral and ethical frameworks that seek to answer the major questions of meaning and purpose.

An argument could be made in terms of numbers for inclusion of the beliefs of individuals who are 'spiritual but not religious', who believe in some higher power or life force but in a non-defined way, or perhaps who believe in life after death – all of which are common beliefs. But (unlike Humanism) such beliefs are rarely or never articulated in a way susceptible of study except by sociologists of belief, and anyway exactly the same arguments could be made in favour of including the equally widespread – and sometimes indistinguishable – beliefs of vaguely religious individuals who are not particularly aligned to any one of the six principal religions, or who are aligned but whose beliefs fall well away from those of the established hierarchy, or who culturally practice a particular religion but do not believe any of the theological claims.

We are not making a commentary on the legitimacy of studying any of the different religions, worldviews or other approaches we have referred to – young people are often very interested in smaller religions, alternative worldviews and cults, all of which can be prominent in media discourse, and good RE should engage with any questions they have about these different belief systems. However, what we *are* doing is merely outlining the fact that while it is unjustifiable that non-religious worldviews and Humanism are excluded, it would be logically coherent to allow the

systematic study of a non-religious worldview and then specify, in an annex, additional content for the only commonplace and clearly articulated non-religious worldview, namely Humanism.

We return to more passive questions of preferred terminology (i.e. 'beliefs' vs 'non-religious worldviews') later on.

### **The place of non-religious worldviews and Humanism in Part Two**

There seems to be some confusion between the requirement, on the one hand, for study in part two to be systematically focussed on one or two religions, and the requirement, on the other hand, to take a more thematic approach, particularly with respect to 'religious, philosophical and ethical studies in the modern world'. Non-religious worldviews seem to us to be particularly vulnerable to exclusion as a result of this, due to the fact that the proposed content does not allow them to be systematically studied.

More generally, once again we firmly believe that such systematic study of a non-religious worldview should be possible, alongside the study of a religion. We think this for reasons we have already set out.

#### What we want to see change, in practice

In practice, for the full course, we would only want the programme of study amended to require the study of '*either one or two religions or one religion and one non-religious worldview.*' Again, we would not see the need for students to only be able to study one non-religious worldview. We strongly support young people learning about a broad range of religions and non-religious worldviews and would not want it to be possible for non-religious worldviews to be the only area of study.

The 'textual studies' area, as currently drafted, is somewhat challenging for non-religious worldviews, as many such worldviews, such as Humanism, do not have 'primary texts'. However, we believe something requiring students to study '*primary religious texts from one or both of the religions they have studied for Part One: Study of Religions, or both primary religious texts from the one religion and highly influential publications from the non-religious worldview they have studied for Part One: Study of Religions*' would be sufficiently clear. We would want to see further amendments to the text, in particular the themes, to include non-religious worldviews throughout. Again, in annex 3 we have specified what this text might look like.

For the 'religious, philosophical and ethical studies in the modern world' section, again we would want amendments to make the subject content inclusive of non-religious worldviews throughout. Again, in annex 3 we have specified what this text might look like.

## **The terminology used and lack of inclusivity of the language more generally**

### Lack of inclusivity in general

We are disappointed by the general lack of inclusive language in the subject content, other than one or two notable exceptions. Prior to publication of the consultation document, we were repeatedly assured that the subject content, particularly outside of part one, would use inclusive language, but it does not seem to us that it actually deserves this commendation.

Some of the places where the language is inclusive are logically inconsistent, for example paragraph 12 says that 'all specifications must require students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding that religious traditions in Great Britain are diverse and include the following religions: Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism, as well as other religions and non-religious beliefs'. But how can specifications require students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of that degree of diversity when the programme of study limits specifications to the study of two religions specifically, and the topics do not allow space for putting those two religions within their broader context?

The aim expressed at the start that specifications should 'develop students' knowledge and understanding of religions and non-religious beliefs' seems to be somewhat tokenistic – it is difficult to know how specifications will do this can achieve it, as when the subject content gets more specific, it tends to become more restrictive, particularly in relation to 'religious studies' and 'textual studies', which make up between 50% and 100% of the total.

In total we can see eight references to non-religious beliefs/worldviews across the 22 pages of subject content.<sup>11</sup> By comparison, the 26-page long *Curriculum Framework for Religious Education in England* contains some 120 references to non-religious beliefs/worldviews.<sup>12</sup> (By comparison, 'religion/s/us' appears some 224 times, 'religious' 81 times and 'Christian/s/ity' some 30 times).

Most worryingly, the term 'worldview', which appears 100 times in the framework, does not appear in the GCSE subject content at all, nor does 'Humanism'. And there is no definition of the term 'belief' or of 'non-religious beliefs'.

### The language of 'non-religious worldviews' vs 'beliefs' etc.

Where the subject content does refer to non-religious beliefs or worldviews, it is invariably through use of the phrase 'non-religious beliefs' or by referring to

<sup>11</sup> Four to 'non-religious beliefs', one to 'religion or belief', five to 'religion/s and belief/s' (but two clearly mean 'religious beliefs').

<sup>12</sup> 'Worldview/s' appears 100 times, 'non-religious' a further six times, 'humanist/s' six times, 'Humanism' four times, 'religion/s and belief/s' three times and 'religions, beliefs' once.

'religion/s and/or belief/s'. But the terms 'beliefs', 'non-religious beliefs' or 'secular philosophies'<sup>13</sup> are **ambiguous and easily misunderstood**. For this reason, the term 'non-religious worldviews' or the phrase 'religions and worldviews' is better, along with a definition of what is meant (as we have provided above), **and for these reasons this is what the 2013 framework does.**

As long ago as in its 1989 Handbook for SACREs, ASCs and Schools, the REC stated that one generally accepted aim of RE would be, 'To encourage knowledge and understanding of religions and similar world views.' Even then this usage was no novelty and there has been a general acceptance among RE teachers and specialists for over fifty years that an RE that does not pay some attention to non-religious worldviews is incomplete. The 2013 framework has a footnote explaining that 'The phrase 'religions and worldviews' is used to refer to Christianity, other principal religions represented in Britain, smaller religious communities and non-religious worldviews such as Humanism. The phrase is meant to be inclusive.' This very clearly delimits what is meant by the phrase.

In fact, the phrase was used by the then Secretary of State in his foreword to the 2013 framework: 'All children need to acquire core knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and practices of the religions and worldviews which not only shape their history and culture but which guide their own development... This RE curriculum framework... has the endorsement of a very wide range of professional organisations and bodies representing faiths and other worldviews. I hope the document will be useful to all those seeking to provide RE of the highest quality for young people in our schools.'

Not only are the terminology and omission of any definition concerning for lack of clarity: they also lead to inconsistency with 2013 framework, which in itself should be something the DfE is seeking to achieve.

This is, perhaps, less of an issue for this subject content than it was for the framework, as the subject content is less likely to be used by teachers in a direct sense. However, it still strikes us that it would be helpful for awarding organisations to be given clear and consistent subject content.

If a clear definition of 'non-religious worldviews' and the phrase 'religions and worldviews' is provided at the start, perhaps in a footnote, then it would be sufficient to just refer to 'worldviews' throughout the rest of the document. This is the approach taken by the 2013 framework, which we welcomed at the time.<sup>14</sup>

### **The 'two religions' requirement in Part One**

<sup>13</sup> Which has not been used but has appeared in other documents in the past.

<sup>14</sup> 'New RE subject framework makes clear: schools should put non-religious beliefs on equal footing', British Humanist Association, 23 October 2014: <https://humanism.org.uk/2013/10/23/new-re-subject-framework-makes-clear-schools-put-non-religious-beliefs-equal-footing/>

With all of that said, we do welcome the fact that students will have to study two religions in part one, and will not be able to focus solely on one religion, as has been possible hitherto. We believe it is vital that all young people learn about the full range of religious and non-religious worldviews that are commonplace in British society. Learning about different religions and worldviews makes a significant contribution to respect and tolerance of individuals with different beliefs, building mutual understanding, and hence improving community cohesion.

As a result, the proposed change to require schools to teach two religions does not, in our opinion, go as far as we would like – we would want students to have to focus on more than two religions and worldviews (the current subject content allows for three) and for thematic study to be an option for some or all of the qualification. We would also want to see more coherence with the curriculum that students study at key stages one to three, in order to ensure that every student studies, at a minimum, all of the six principal religions and Humanism over the course of their time in school.

But, with that said, the requirement to study two religions is nonetheless very welcome progress towards that ideal goal.

2 Is the revised A level content in religious studies appropriate? Please consider:

- whether the content reflects what students need to know in order to progress to undergraduate study.

Please provide evidence to support your response.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure
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Comments:

We have set out at length in our response to question one why we want GCSE students to have the option to systematically study a non-religious worldview (i.e. Humanism) as well as religions. For all the same reasons, we want students to be able to systematically study Humanism at AS and A level. However, we would not want students to be able to study a non-religious worldview for their entire qualification, as we want every student to study a diversity of perspectives, so would be happy to see a statement added saying that students may only study a non-religious worldview in either their 'systematic study' or their 'textual studies'.

We would wish to see further changes to the text in order to ensure that inclusive phraseology is used throughout and in order to make the language around 'beliefs' vs 'worldviews' easier to understand. In annex 3 we have suggested amendments to the text, and in our response to question one we have explained the reason why

we want to see these changes made.

We will also be responding to Ofqual's consultation, calling for similar changes to ensure the assessment objectives are inclusive in their language.

What we want to see change, in more detail

We would want to see the aims and objectives changed to add references to non-religious worldviews alongside references to religion/s.

With respect to 'Systematic Study of one Religion', we would want it to be possible to systematically study one non-religious worldview, and have appropriate re-wording throughout.

With respect to 'Textual Studies', again we would want students to be able to study a non-religious worldview. However, we would not want students to be able to study a non-religious worldview for both their 'Systematic Study' and 'Textual Studies', as we want students to be exposed to a diversity of perspectives. Therefore we would be happy to see a statement added saying that students may only study a non-religious worldview if they have not done so in their 'systematic study of one religion or non-religious worldview' (and by implication, vice versa).

In annex 3 we have suggested amendments to the text with respect to 'Systematic Study of one Religion', 'Philosophical, Ethical and Social Scientific Studies of Religion' and 'Textual Studies' to make it inclusive.

Finally, we would like to see the part that refers to '*the challenges of secularism, science, responses to pluralism and diversity within traditions, migration, the changing roles of men and women, feminist and liberationist approaches*' refer to '*the influences...*' instead of '*the challenges...*'. While the social and historical developments listed have often been seen by religions to be challenges, at other times religions have embraced or been indifferent to the changes that they have caused. It is wrong for the specifications to prejudge the nature of the interaction.

3 Is the revised AS qualification content in religious studies appropriate?

Please provide evidence to support your response.

Agree

Disagree

Not sure

Comments: Please see our response to question 2, above.

4 Do you think that any of the proposals have the potential to have a disproportionate impact, positive or negative, on specific students, in particular those with 'relevant protected characteristics'? (The relevant protected characteristics are disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.)

Please provide evidence to support your response.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
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Comments: (We are not sure whether we should tick 'Agree' or 'Disagree' if we believe that the proposals might have a disproportionate negative impact on some students but believe that they will.)

We believe that the proposals will have a disproportionate negative impact on students of no religion. As we set out in our response to question one, it is hard to see how RE and RS can remain relevant to young people today, particularly to those with no religion, if non-religious beliefs cannot be systematically studied.

5 How could any adverse impact be reduced and how could the subject content of GCSEs and/or A levels be altered to better advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it?

Please provide evidence to support your response.

Comments: Any adverse impact can be remedied by making the changes we have requested in our response to questions one, two and three, above. Changes to the assessment objectives will also be required and we will be saying this in our response to Ofqual's consultation.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

<b>Please acknowledge this reply.</b>	
E-mail address for acknowledgement:	

Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, please confirm below if you would be willing to be contacted again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
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All DfE public consultations are required to meet the Cabinet Office [Principles on Consultation](#)

The key Consultation Principles are:

- departments will follow a range of timescales rather than defaulting to a 12-week period, particularly where extensive engagement has occurred before
- departments will need to give more thought to how they engage with and use real discussion with affected parties and experts as well as the expertise of civil service learning to make well informed decisions
- departments should explain what responses they have received and how these have been used in formulating policy
- consultation should be 'digital by default', but other forms should be used where these are needed to reach the groups affected by a policy
- the principles of the Compact between government and the voluntary and community sector will continue to be respected.

If you have any comments on how DfE consultations are conducted, please contact Aileen Shaw, DfE Consultation Coordinator, tel: 0370 000 2288 / email: [aileen.shaw@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:aileen.shaw@education.gsi.gov.uk)

**Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.**

Completed responses should be sent to the address shown below by 29 December 2014

Send by post to: Alex Smith, Floor 2, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith St, Westminster, London SW1P 3BT, UK.

Send by e-mail to:

[RSGCSEandAlevelSeptember.CONULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:RSGCSEandAlevelSeptember.CONULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk)

## Annex 1: Why Humanism is included in ‘Religious Education’ (‘RE’)

Humanism has been studied in RE for about fifty years. In its report *RE, Attainment and National Curriculum* (1991), the Religious Education Council set out the standard case for inclusion:

- *RE should be open to all pupils regardless of their beliefs.*
- *If RE is ‘open’ it is necessary for pupils to learn that there are many who do not believe or practise a theistic or religious world-view. Indeed if pupils did not learn this, it could be said they were victims of indoctrination.*
- *Humanism and other non-theistic beliefs have their own views about religion and these ought to be part of a pupil's RE.*
- *Humanist thinking has influenced the RE and PSE curriculum, particularly in the exploration of the term 'spiritual'.*
- *Many pupils come from non-religious backgrounds and probably share some of the views humanists express.*
- *The RE Council has benefited since its foundation from the active membership of the BHA in its ranks.*

Today, the RE Council’s vision is that ‘Every young person experiences a personally inspiring and academically rigorous education in religious and non-religious worldviews.’<sup>1</sup>

A 2013 survey found that more people consider RE to have been the ‘least beneficial subject’ than any other.<sup>2</sup> **It is vital that RE stays relevant to our population if it is to maintain its place within the curriculum.** Pupils in all types of school should have the opportunity to consider philosophical and fundamental questions, and in an open society we should learn about each other’s beliefs. There should be a subject on the curriculum which helps young people to form and explore their own beliefs and develop an understanding of the beliefs and values different from their own; enriches pupils’ knowledge of the religious and humanist heritage of humanity and so supports other subjects such as History, English Literature, Art, Music, and Geography; and allows pupils to engage with serious ethical and philosophical questions in a way that develops important skills of critical thinking, reasoning and inquiry.

All the usual **contemporary justifications for the subject of Religious Education in the school curriculum** – its contribution to social cohesion and mutual understanding, its presentation of a range of answers to questions of meaning and purpose, its role in educating about the history and present culture of humanity, and its role in the search for personal identity and values – can only be served by including humanist perspectives and non-religious students.

Surveys consistently show that a **high proportion of young people are not religious**; for example, the 2011 Census found 31% of 0-19 year olds having no religion, with a further 8% not stated; the 2003 *Citizenship Survey* found 46% of 11-15 year olds not having a religion (44% were Christian);<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Aims, Vision and Values*, Religious Education Council for England and Wales:

<http://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/about/how-the-rec-works/aims-vision-and-values>

<sup>2</sup> <http://news.opinium.co.uk/sites/news.opinium.co.uk/files/OP3507%20-%20Opinium%20PR%20-%20Education%20-%20SET%20FOUR%20-%20Tables.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Christine Farmer, ‘2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey: Top-level findings from the Children’s and Young People’s Survey’ (Home Office and Department for Education and Skills, 2005), p. 37:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120919132719/http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/452490.pdf>

while a 2004 Department for Education report found 65% of 12-19 year olds are not religious;<sup>4</sup> and the 2013 *British Social Attitudes Survey* records 69% of 15-24 year olds as not belonging to any religion.<sup>5</sup> For RE to remain relevant as a subject, it is vital that it is as relevant to these young people as it is to their religious peers.

Finally, the inclusion of non-religious worldviews in the curriculum alongside religious beliefs reflects consistent recommendations in **international agreements** such as the ODIHR-OSCE's *Toledo Guiding Principles on teaching about religions and beliefs in public schools* (2007),<sup>6</sup> the *Final Document of the International Consultative Conference on School Education in Relation to Freedom of Religion or Belief, Tolerance and Non-Discrimination* (2001),<sup>7</sup> and the Council of Europe's *Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education* (2008).<sup>8</sup> Such inclusion was specifically recommended in the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief's last report on the UK.<sup>9</sup>

### **Humanists' work in RE**

The BHA is a founding member of the RE Council for England and Wales (REC), and for many years there has been a humanist on the Board of the REC. The BHA is also strongly supportive of the role schools play in furthering pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The BHA helped to develop Ofsted's 2004 guidance on this matter, and endorses the definition of spiritual development that they use. The BHA has been part of most government and quango initiatives on RE in the last couple of decades.

Many SACREs have had humanist representatives for many decades, including as Chairs and Vice-Chairs of both SACREs and ASCs. Recent years have seen a large rise in the number of humanists who are on SACREs: almost six out of seven English SACREs now have a humanist or are in the process of admitting one. The contribution of humanists to RE is enormous.

### **Successive government views on Humanism in RE**

In 1994 the then (Conservative) Secretary of State for Education wrote to the BHA: 'Let me assure you that we fully appreciate the role which the BHA in particular has played in the development of RE in this country,' and '...it is perfectly possible for RE to include teaching about non-theistic ways of life, such as humanism, and the moral values associated with them.' This inclusion of Humanism can be seen in all more recent national Government publications on RE. For example:

- The 2004 National Framework says 'To ensure that all pupils' voices are heard and the religious education curriculum is broad and balanced, it is recommended that there are opportunities for

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<sup>4</sup> Alison Park, Miranda Phillips and Mark Johnson, 'Young People in Britain: The Attitudes and Experiences of 12 to 19 Year Olds' (Department for Education and Skills, 2004), pp. 10-11:

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/RR564.pdf.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> From the British Social Attitudes Information System, with cross-tabs by age:

[http://www.britisocat.com/BodyTwoCol\\_rpt.aspx?control=CCESDMarginals&MapID=RELIGION&SeriesID=12](http://www.britisocat.com/BodyTwoCol_rpt.aspx?control=CCESDMarginals&MapID=RELIGION&SeriesID=12)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.osce.org/odihr/29154>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.hurights.or.jp/archives/human\\_rights\\_education\\_in\\_asian\\_schools/section2/2002/03/final-document-of-the-international-consultative-conference-on-school-education-in-relation-to-freed.html](http://www.hurights.or.jp/archives/human_rights_education_in_asian_schools/section2/2002/03/final-document-of-the-international-consultative-conference-on-school-education-in-relation-to-freed.html)

<sup>8</sup> <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1386911&Site=CM>

<sup>9</sup> A/HRC/7/10/Add.3 *Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Asma Jahangir into the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (June 2007)*, United Nations Human Rights Council, (amongst others) paragraph 69, 7 February 2008:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/Visits.aspx>

all pupils to study... secular philosophies such as humanism.’ And during key stages 1-3, it is recommended that pupils study ‘a secular world view, where appropriate’.<sup>10</sup>

- The 2007 key stage 3 programme of study makes the same recommendation, defining a secular world view as ‘secular philosophies such as Humanism.’<sup>11</sup> The key stage 4 programme of study says that pupils should have ‘opportunities to study a range of philosophical and ethical issues that are of relevance to young people’s experience or aspirations and that make reference to some religious and philosophical traditions.’ ‘Religious and philosophical traditions’ is defined as including ‘Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, the Baha’i faith, Jainism, Zoroastrianism and secular philosophies such as Humanism.’<sup>12</sup>
- The (abandoned) 2010 primary programme of learning states ‘To ensure that all children’s voices are heard, it is recommended that there are opportunities to study other religious traditions such as the Baha’i faith, Jainism, and Zoroastrianism, and secular world views, such as humanism’, adding, ‘Over the primary phase as a whole, children should draw on both religious and non-religious world views.’<sup>13</sup>
- The 2010 non-statutory guidance includes several references to Humanism.<sup>14</sup> In addition, in all these documents, RE is defined as important because ‘It develops children’s knowledge and understanding of religions and beliefs, including Christianity, other principal religions, other religious traditions and other world views’ (or something equivalent). The 2010 primary programme of learning adds that ‘The phrase ‘religions and beliefs’ should be taken to include religious and secular world views, and their associated practices.’
- The 2013 religious education curriculum framework, produced by the Religious Education Council for England and Wales and endorsed by the Government, contains 100 references to teaching about non-religious worldviews – putting Humanism on an equal footing with teaching about religions.<sup>15</sup> The document says that ‘The phrase ‘religions and worldviews’ is used in this document to refer to Christianity, other principal religions represented in Britain, smaller religious communities and non-religious worldviews such as Humanism. The phrase is meant to be inclusive’. It also says ‘The curriculum for RE aims to ensure that all pupils: A. Know about and understand a range of religions and worldviews; B. Express ideas and insights about the nature, significance and impact of religions and worldviews; C. Gain and deploy the skills needed to engage seriously with religions and worldviews’.<sup>16</sup>
- The Independent School Standards require that independent schools, Academies and Free Schools ‘actively promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.’<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>

[http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20090903160937/http://qca.org.uk/libraryAssets/media/9817\\_re\\_national\\_framework\\_04.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20090903160937/http://qca.org.uk/libraryAssets/media/9817_re_national_framework_04.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> [http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110813032310/http://curriculum.qcda.gov.uk/uploads/QCA-07-3350-p\\_RE\\_KS3\\_tcm8-411.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110813032310/http://curriculum.qcda.gov.uk/uploads/QCA-07-3350-p_RE_KS3_tcm8-411.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> [http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110813032310/http://curriculum.qcda.gov.uk/uploads/QCA-07-3351-p\\_RE\\_KS4\\_tcm8-412.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110813032310/http://curriculum.qcda.gov.uk/uploads/QCA-07-3351-p_RE_KS4_tcm8-412.pdf)

<sup>13</sup>

[http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100202100434/http://qcda.gov.uk/libraryAssets/media/095654\\_QCA\\_PCR\\_Rel\\_Educ\\_SS5.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100202100434/http://qcda.gov.uk/libraryAssets/media/095654_QCA_PCR_Rel_Educ_SS5.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> <http://education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/subjects/a0064886/religious-education-in-english-schools-non-statutory-guidance-2010>

<sup>15</sup> ‘New RE subject framework makes clear: schools should put non-religious beliefs on equal footing’, British Humanist Association, 23 October 2014: <https://humanism.org.uk/2013/10/23/new-re-subject-framework-makes-clear-schools-put-non-religious-beliefs-equal-footing/>

<sup>16</sup> *A Curriculum Framework for Religious Education in England*, The Religious Education Council of England and Wales, 23 October 2014: <http://resubjectreview.recouncil.org.uk/re-review-report>

<sup>17</sup> The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2014/2374/made>

Departmental advice recommends that schools meet this standard by using ‘teaching resources from a wide variety of sources to help pupils understand a range of faiths, and beliefs such as atheism and humanism.’<sup>18</sup>

The last major survey of the extent to which Humanism is included in locally agreed syllabuses was carried out in 2007. This found that 62 of 80 syllabuses include Humanism.<sup>19</sup> The level of inclusion of Humanism in syllabuses today is higher. The latest RE Subject Framework therefore represents no revolution, only an extension of a decades-long trend.

### **Postscript on ‘worldviews’**

As long ago as in its 1989 Handbook for SACREs, ASCs and Schools, the REC stated that one generally accepted aim of RE would be, ‘To encourage knowledge and understanding of religions and similar world views.’ Even then this usage was no novelty and there has been a general acceptance among RE teachers and specialists for over fifty years that an RE that does not pay some attention to non-religious worldviews is incomplete. The RE Subject Framework uses the word ‘worldviews’ because all the alternative terms: ‘beliefs’, ‘non-religious beliefs’ or ‘secular philosophies’ are ambiguous and easily misunderstood. The Framework has a footnote explaining that ‘The phrase ‘religions and worldviews’ is used to refer to Christianity, other principal religions represented in Britain, smaller religious communities and non-religious worldviews such as Humanism. The phrase is meant to be inclusive.’ This very clearly delimits what is meant by the phrase.

It was used in the Secretary of State in his forward to the Framework: ‘All children need to acquire core knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and practices of the religions and worldviews which not only shape their history and culture but which guide their own development... This RE curriculum framework... has the endorsement of a very wide range of professional organisations and bodies representing faiths and other worldviews. I hope the document will be useful to all those seeking to provide RE of the highest quality for young people in our schools.’

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<sup>18</sup> *Improving the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils* Departmental advice for independent schools, academies and free schools, Department for Education, November 2013: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-the-smsc-development-of-pupils-in-independent-schools>

<sup>19</sup> Dr Jacqueline Watson, ‘Humanism in Agreed Syllabuses for Religious Education: A Report to the British Humanist Association’, University of East Anglia, 2007: <http://humanism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Watson-Syllabus-Report.pdf>

## **Annex 2: Widespread support for the study of Humanism**

### **Letter supporting inclusion:**

Dear Mr Gibb,

We are startled to see that the new GCSE and AS and A level Religious Studies criteria, currently being consulted on by the Government, do not propose to allow for the systematic study of non-religious worldviews. Annexes at GCSE prescribe content for each of the principal religions but there is no equivalent annex for Humanism, even though one was provided to the Department. This is completely out of step with Religious Education as it is taught in many schools today, which reflects the fact that while many young people nowadays hold religious beliefs, many others hold non-religious beliefs, and both religious and non-religious beliefs influence most young people.

The latest RE curriculum framework for teaching prior to GCSE level was produced last year and recommends the study of non-religious worldviews like Humanism alongside religions – a simple codification of the developing place of non-religious beliefs in RE which has evolved over many decades. It was endorsed by the then Secretary of State, who in his foreword made explicit approving reference to teaching non-religious worldviews.

Now the Government is proposing to turn the clock back, ignoring the experience of young people, the current practice of teachers, and the requirements of a rigorous education. We urge you to think again.

Yours sincerely,

### **Philosophers and other academics (non-RE):**

1. Dr Catharine Abell, Senior Lecturer in Philosophy, University of Manchester
2. Dr Arif Ahmed, Senior Lecturer in Philosophy, University of Cambridge
3. David Archard, Professor of Philosophy, Queen's University Belfast
4. Helen Beebee, Samuel Hall Professor of Philosophy, University of Manchester
5. Simon Blackburn, former Professor of Philosophy, University of Cambridge, Fellow, Trinity College Cambridge, and Distinguished Professor of Philosophy, UNC-Chapel Hill
6. Margaret A. Boden, Research Professor of Cognitive Science, University of Sussex
7. Dr Stephen Burwood, Lecturer in Philosophy, University of Hull
8. Dr Peter Cave, Lecturer in Philosophy, Open University
9. Andrew Chitty, Senior Lecturer in Philosophy, University of Sussex
10. Andy Clark, Professor of Logic and Metaphysics, University of Edinburgh
11. Michael Clark, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, University of Nottingham
12. Antony Duff, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, University of Stirling
13. John Dupré, Professor of Philosophy of Science, University of Exeter
14. Dr Nicholas Everitt, Senior Research Fellow in Philosophy, University of East Anglia
15. Simon Glendinning, Professor of European Philosophy, LSE
16. A. C. Grayling, philosopher and Master of the New College of the Humanities
17. Dr Peter King, Lecturer in Philosophy, University of Oxford
18. Dr Brendan Larvor, Reader in Philosophy and Head of Philosophy, University of Hertfordshire
19. Dr Stephen Law, Senior Lecturer in Philosophy, Heythrop College, University of London
20. Ardon Lyon, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, City University London
21. D. H. Mellor, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, University of Cambridge
22. Peter Millican, Gilbert Ryle Fellow and Professor of Philosophy, University of Oxford

23. Richard Norman, Emeritus Professor of Moral Philosophy, University of Kent
24. Eric Olson, Professor of Philosophy, University of Sheffield
25. David Papineau, Professor of Philosophy, King's College London
26. Derek Parfit, Professor of Philosophy, University of Oxford
27. Duncan Pritchard, Professor and Chair in Epistemology, University of Edinburgh
28. Janet Radcliffe Richards, Professor of Practical Philosophy, University of Oxford
29. Jonathan Rée, philosopher and author
30. Theodore Scaltsas, Professor and Chair of Ancient Philosophy, University of Edinburgh
31. Peter Simons, Professor of Philosophy, Chair of Moral Philosophy and Head of the School of Social Sciences and Philosophy, Trinity College Dublin
32. Kate Soper, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, London Metropolitan University
33. Tom Sorell, Professor of Politics and Philosophy, University of Warwick
34. Dr Tanja Staehler, Reader in Philosophy and Head of the Department of Philosophy, University of Sussex
35. Thomas Uebel, Professor of Philosophy, University of Manchester
36. Dr Nigel Warburton, philosopher and author
37. Keith Ward, Regius Professor Emeritus of Divinity, University of Oxford
38. John White, Emeritus Professor of the Philosophy of Education, Institute of Education, University of London
39. Stephen Wilkinson, Professor of Bioethics, Lancaster University

**RE professionals (other than teachers):**

40. David Aldridge, Principal Lecturer in Philosophy of Education and Programme Lead for Professional Education, Oxford Brookes University
41. Maxine Beech, RE teacher and research fellow, Farmington Institute
42. Revd Kevin Blogg, RE consultant and SACRE advisor, Norfolk
43. Revd Robert Boulter, Associate Principal Lecturer in Primary Education, Leeds Trinity University and consultant, Leeds SACRE
44. Alan Brine, former HMI and National Lead for Religious Education within Ofsted (2007-2014)
45. Roger Butler, RE consultant and SACRE advisor, London
46. George Casley, Lecturer and religious education consultant
47. Denise Chaplin, RE advisor, London
48. Mark Chater, Director of a Christian educational charity supporting research, development and innovation in RE and former Senior Adviser for RE, Qualifications & Curriculum Development Agency (2006-10)
49. Andrew Copson, Chief Executive, British Humanist Association and board member, Religious Education Council for England and Wales
50. Trevor Cooling, Professor of Christian Education and Director of National Institute for Christian Education Research, Canterbury Christ Church University
51. Denise Cush, Professor of Religion and Education, Bath Spa University
52. Dr Wendy Dossett, Senior Lecturer in Religious Studies, University of Chester
53. Dr Nigel Fancourt, Lecturer, Department of Education, University of Oxford
54. Dave Francis, education consultant and SACRE advisor
55. Brian Gates, Emeritus Professor of Religion, Ethics & Education, University of Cumbria and former Chair of the Religious Education Council of England and Wales (1984-90 and 2002-11)
56. David Harris, education consultant and Senior Member, Wolfson College, University of Cambridge
57. Paul Hopkins, Lecturer in Education, University of Hull

58. Alex Howard, former Visiting Lecturer in Philosophy at Newcastle University and former RE teacher
59. Robert Jackson, Professor of Education and former Director, Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit (1994-2012)
60. Sarah Lane-Cawte, board member and Chair of Governance Committee, Religious Education Council for England and Wales
61. Jonny Lawson, RE Teacher and executive member, NATRE
62. Phil Leivers, board member and Chair of Professional Development Committee, Religious Education Council for England and Wales
63. Nora Leonard, education consultant and SACRE advisor, London
64. Lesley Prior, RE consultant, SACRE advisor, and Senior Lecturer in Religious Education, University of Roehampton
65. Revd Michael J Reiss, Professor of Science Education, Institute of Education, University of London
66. Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain, Maidenhead Synagogue
67. Alastair Ross, RE Consultant and SACRE advisor, West Yorkshire
68. Stephen Shashoua, Director, 3FF (Three Faiths Forum)
69. Dr Jacqueline Watson, Visiting Fellow in Education and former Director of the Centre for Spirituality and Religion in Education, University of East Anglia

#### **RE teachers:**

70. Joanne Bagnall, RE Co-ordinator, Nook Lane Junior School, Sheffield
71. Hayley Bennett, RE Teacher, City of Bradford
72. Dr Robin M. Bevan, Headteacher, Southend High School for Boys
73. Ben Britton, Head of RE, Garth Hill College, Bracknell
74. Katie Brook, RE Teacher, Bracknell
75. Ellen Chisman, RE Teacher, Kirklees
76. Shirley Dang, RE Coordinator and Early Years Teacher, Hackney
77. Ms L Douglas, Philosophy and Ethics Teacher
78. Andrew Duffield, Humanities Co-ordinator, Haltwhistle Community Campus, Northumberland
79. Peter Gray, Primary Teacher, Derbyshire
80. Mike Harrison, former ESOL teacher, London
81. Helen Hodgson, RE Teacher
82. Laura Harvey, Head of Religious Studies, Newstead Wood School, Bromley
83. Amy Hyde, Teacher of Belief and Ethics, Suffolk
84. Jon Knight, Head of Philosophy and Ethics, Worcestershire
85. Ben Maddison, RE teacher, Southend High School for Boys
86. Alexandra Maxted, RE teacher, Hampshire
87. David Moffat, RE Teacher, Kingsbury High School, Brent
88. Max Mulvaney, RE Teacher, Blenheim High School, Epsom
89. Clare O'Brien, RS & Philosophy teacher and teacher trainer, Graveney School, Wandsworth
90. Margaret O'Sullivan, Head of RE, St. John's School, Episkopi, Cyprus
91. Iain Paterson, former HMI with responsibility for religious education
92. Shammi Rahman, RE teacher, Milton Keynes
93. Claire Sadler-Penn, Deputy Head Teacher, Nottingham
94. Alice Severs, former Deputy Head Teacher
95. Louise Stinchcombe, RE Teacher
96. Francesca Thomas, Secondary Teacher of RE and Philosophy, Cornwall

97. Rebecca Ward, Head of Department for Philosophy and Theology, Graveney School, Wandsworth
98. Richard Woffenden, Ethics, Religion, Ideas and Citizenship Teacher, Royds Hall Community School, Huddersfield
99. Hannah Yearsley, Teacher of Religious Studies, Humanities and Citizenship, Kent

**Authors:**

100. Jonathan Emmett, children's author
101. Matt Haig, writer, children's author and journalist
102. Natalie Haynes, writer, children's author and broadcaster
103. Michael Rosen, children's author, poet and former Children's Laureate
104. Alom Shaha, author, *The Young Atheist's Handbook*

**Messages from RE professionals, philosophers, parents and pupils supporting inclusion**

**RE Council for England and Wales:** The REC told its members that at its September Board meeting, 'Board members agreed that should the consultation criteria fail to include the option for systematic study of a non-religious worldview in parallel with study of a religion, then the REC's response would note this as unacceptable in relation to the RE Review, the REC's vision and on general educational grounds.'

Upon publication of the criteria, the REC provided a statement to the BHA saying that 'In our most recent curriculum document, *Religious education: a national curriculum framework*, we made clear our policy that religious education in schools and colleges should include the study of non-religious worldviews alongside religious traditions. Dr Joyce Miller, Chair of the REC, said 'The REC Board has agreed unanimously that the optional systematic study of a non-religious worldview should be introduced at GCSE level. We want to promote a rigorous and inclusive study of religions and beliefs that is relevant and challenging for young people of all faiths and none.'

**3FF:** 3FF, also known as the Three Faiths Forum, is an organisation that runs dialogue workshops in schools and 'faith' school linking programmes. These initiatives have been widely critically acclaimed. Director of 3FF Stephen Shashoua said of the consultation, 'The current suggestions don't go far enough. Young people need an opportunity to learn about non-religious worldviews as well as religious, and develop an understanding of actual lived diversity in the UK, not just abstract facts.'

Ben Britton, Head of RE at Garth Hill College, Bracknell, told us, 'I am supporting this as a Christian and I very much hope that no-one thinks that it is only humanists pushing for this change. Humanism sits well alongside other worldviews and is essential for pupils who sometimes struggle to connect with traditional religious ideas. If we value all belief systems excluding humanism doesn't make sense to me.'

Shammi Rahman, an RE Teacher in Milton Keynes, told us, 'As a Muslim and an experienced RE teacher, I think it is appalling that humanism is not being included. I have always taught non-religious perspectives in my lessons and will continue to do so. Those calling for inclusion have my support.'

16-year old Aneira Carter, from Hackney, told us, 'I'm in year twelve so have just finished my GCSEs. I enjoyed Religious Education very much in lower school, however I felt the curriculum was very limited in its exploration of non-religious viewpoints. This was the main reason for why I decided not to take Religious Studies at GCSE. I think that RS is a very important subject and is key in helping

children understand the world and help them develop into understanding and respectful adults. However as a humanist I think that the GCSE RS course does not include my views and the views of many other atheists and humanists wanting to study religion and we feel excluded by the lack of education about our beliefs. RS needs to be taught to my generation but the current curriculum is just not representative of our beliefs today.'

Natalie Raja, a parent from Richmond-upon-Thames, told us, 'My husband is a Muslim but I am a humanist and it seems crazy, to me, that our children will be able to systematically study his beliefs at school but not mine. Both our worldviews are well thought out and compassionate outlooks on life – so why the discriminatory treatment?'

Simon Blackburn, former Professor of Philosophy at the University of Cambridge, told us, 'It is impossible to get a complete view of the religious landscape without also studying non-religious beliefs. The non-religious have so much to say about religions that to take one without equally taking the other is to deny all pupils – whether religious or not – a full understanding of this vital subject.'

Dr Peter King, Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Oxford, told us, 'Humanism is not a religion but at the same time, it is clear that Religious Education is the natural home on our current curriculum for the study of non-religious worldviews. This is because the justifications given for RE's importance, such as its contributions to community cohesion, to understanding those different from ourselves, and to being able to address life's big questions, only make sense if RE is fully inclusive of all major worldviews, whether religious or not.'

Richard Norman, Emeritus Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Kent, told us, 'Religious Education is not just a matter of learning about religions. Its deeper purpose is to help young people to articulate and explore their own beliefs and values, especially when they reach GCSE age and are gaining the confidence to think for themselves and reach their own conclusions. Two-thirds of teenagers have no religious beliefs. If the GCSE syllabus does not help them to examine and deepen their understanding of humanist and other non-religious beliefs, it will be failing the majority of our young people.'

### Annex 3: Changes we would want to the subject criteria

In what follows, we have underlined any text we would like to see added, and ~~struck out~~ any text we wish to see removed.

#### GCSE Religious Studies part one

In practice for the full course, we would want the programme of study amended to read:

*[5.] Study of religion and non-religious worldviews: the beliefs and teachings and sources of wisdom and authority (topics a and b from Part One) in relation to two religions or one religion and one non-religious worldview (making up 50% of the overall qualification weighting, shared equally between the two religions or one religion and one non-religious worldview)...*

OR

*study all four topics from Part One in relation to a primary religion or non-religious worldview (50% of the overall qualification weighting); AND beliefs and teachings and sources of wisdom and authority (topics a and b from Part One) in relation to a second religion or first non-religious worldview (25% of the qualification)...*

For the short course, we would want specifications to offer the opportunity to either:

*[19.] study beliefs and teachings and sources of wisdom and authority (topics a and b from Part One) in relation to two religions or one religion and one non-religious worldview, OR study beliefs and teachings (topic a from Part One) only in relation to two religions or one religion and one non-religious worldview...*

We do not see the need to allow for the study of two non-religious worldviews as in practice there is only one non-religious worldview that is significantly common to merit an annex in its own right, namely Humanism.

Similarly, we would want to see the four topics in the subject content amended to specify:

- a. *beliefs and teachings of religion or non-religious worldviews: beliefs about God, gods or ultimate reality; the role of communities of faith or belief, key moral principles and the meanings and purposes of human life*
- b. *sources of wisdom and authority: the nature, history and treatment of key ~~religious~~ texts or scriptures; and where appropriate, of key ~~religious~~ figures and/or teachers from the early history of the tradition and/or the modern age*
- c. *practices: the application of beliefs and teachings to the lives of modern believers (in the case of religions) or non-believers (in the case of non-religious worldviews) including (as appropriate to each religion or non-religious worldview) the study of places and forms of worship, ~~(as appropriate to each)~~ rituals, prayer, meditation, festivals and celebrations, fasting, rites of passage, religious journeys and pilgrimage*
- d. *forms of expression and ways of life: the impact of beliefs on individuals, communities and societies through ways of life and moral codes, through art forms such as drama, dance, literature, architecture and music inspired by religions ~~and belief~~ or non-religious worldviews, and the role of these art forms in worship or ritual*

– although it would be helpful if even bolder amendments are made to ensure inclusivity.

Finally, we are submitting as an annex to this consultation response an annex on Humanism that we would want to see sit alongside the seven annexes on the principal religions.

## **GCSE Religious Studies part two**

In practice, for the full course, we would only want the programme of study amended to read:

*7. Specifications may offer students the ability to study the themes within Part 2 in relation to differing perspectives from either one or two religions or one religion and one non-religious worldview. Where students approach a theme in relation to one religion, they must study differing perspectives from within that religion in order to ensure they meet the assessment objectives.*

Again, we would not see the need for students to only be able to study one non-religious worldview. We strongly support young people learning about a broad range of religions and non-religious worldviews and would not want it to be possible for non-religious worldviews to be the only area of study.

The 'textual studies' area, as currently drafted, is somewhat challenging for non-religious worldviews, as many such worldviews, such as Humanism, do not have 'primary texts'. However, we believe something along the following lines would be sufficient:

*14. If following a textual studies approach, all students must investigate primary religious texts from one or both of the religions they have studied for Part One: Study of Religions, or both primary religious texts from the one religion and highly influential publications from the non-religious worldview they have studied for Part One: Study of Religions...*

*15. Specifications must require students to demonstrate an understanding of these three issues in relation to the text as whole, while also studying themes of central concern to the ~~religious~~ text they are exploring.*

*16. Specifications should prescribe the study of clearly referenced material from the particular religion, worldview or religions selected. A single extended extract or multiple shorter ones from one or several texts may be specified, but taken as a whole the material must be sufficient to enable the themes to be explored thoroughly, for different perspectives to be explored and for the assessment objectives to be met.*

*17. Decisions about the number and length of the extracts must take account of the level of challenge posed by the comprehension of the material and whether the selection is taken from one ~~religious~~ tradition or two.*

For the 'religious, philosophical and ethical studies in the modern world' section, we would want to see the content read:

*[18. Students] should demonstrate the depth of their understanding of religion and non-religious worldviews through the application of teachings from religions and ~~beliefs~~ worldviews including through specific references to sources of wisdom and authority.*

With respect to the themes, we would want to see the content amended in the following ways:

- a. *accounts in texts of key events in the lives of founders or important ~~religious~~ figures, or important ideas that they had, their significance and impact, including on life in the 21st century...*
- b. *the significance, importance and impact of ~~religious~~ texts as a source for ~~religious~~ law making and codes for living in the 21st century...*
- ...
- d. *relationships and families, religious teachings and/or non-religious beliefs about the nature and purpose of families in the 21st century, sex, marriage, cohabitation and divorce. Issues related to the nature and purpose of families; roles of men and women; equality; gender prejudice and discrimination...*
- e. *religious and/or non-religious views of the world, including their relationship to scientific views; beliefs about death and an afterlife; explanations of the origins of the universe...*
- f. *the existence of God, gods and ultimate reality, and ways in which God, gods or ultimate reality might be understood or reasons they might be rejected; through revelation, visions, miracles or enlightenment...*
- ...
- i. *dialogue within and between religions and non-religious beliefs; how those with religious and non-religious beliefs respond to critiques of their beliefs including the study of a range of attitudes towards those with different ~~religious~~ views – inclusivist, exclusivist and pluralist approaches...*
- j. *religion, non-religious worldviews, human rights and social justice; issues of equality and freedom of religion or belief; prejudice and discrimination in religion and belief; human rights; wealth and poverty; racial prejudice and discrimination...*

## **AS and A Level Religious Studies**

We would want to see the aims and objectives changed to add references to non-religious worldviews alongside references to religion/s.

With respect to 'Systematic Study of one Religion', we would want it to be possible to systematically study one non-religious worldview, and have appropriate re-wording throughout, i.e.:

9. *At AS and A level this includes the study of:*

- *religious or non-religious beliefs, values and teaching in their diverse manifestations in history and in the contemporary world, including those linked to the nature and existence of God or ultimate reality, the role of ~~the community of~~ for believers or non-believers, key moral principles, beliefs about the self, death and afterlife, beliefs about ~~the meaning and purpose of~~ in life*
- *sources of authority and wisdom including, where appropriate; scripture and/or sacred or influential texts and how they are used and treated ~~by believers~~; key ~~religious~~ figures and/or teachers and how they are regarded in relation to other sources of wisdom and authority*
- ...
- *forms of expression inspired and influenced by religion and religious belief or non-religious worldviews and beliefs*

10. *In addition at A level this includes the study of:*

- *significant social and historical developments in theology, ~~or~~ religious or non-religious thought including the ~~challenges~~ influences of secularism, science, responses to pluralism*

*and diversity within traditions, migration, the changing roles of men and women, feminist and liberationist approaches*

...

- *two themes related to issues of identity and belonging for ~~religious~~ believers or non-believers today such as dietary and dress codes, the compatibility of (non-)religious and other forms of identity, issues of equality in the freedom to ~~practice~~ manifest a religion or non-religious worldview*
- *religious and non-religious tolerance, respect and recognition, ~~interfaith~~ dialogue and the ways that religious and non-religious worldviews ~~traditions~~ view other religious traditions worldviews and their truth-claims*
- *how developments in beliefs and practices have, over time, influenced and been influenced by developments in philosophical, ethical and social scientific studies of religion and non-religious worldviews or by textual interpretation*

With respect to 'Philosophical, Ethical and Social Scientific Studies of Religion', we would want to see the following changes:

11. At AS and A level this includes the study of:

...

- *two contrasting approaches to religion or non-religious worldviews and religious or non-religious experience chosen from the fields of psychology, sociology and anthropology*

12. In addition at A level this includes the study of:

...

- *a comparison of the key ideas presented in works of at least two key scholars selected from the fields of the philosophy of religion, ~~religious~~ ethics and/or social scientific study of religion or non-religious worldviews and developments in the way these ideas are applied to contemporary issues in religion and belief*
- *how philosophical, ethical and social scientific studies have, over time, influenced and been influenced by developments in religious or non-religious beliefs and practices or textual interpretation*

Turning to 'Textual Studies', again we would want students to be able to study a non-religious worldview. However, we would not want students to be able to study a non-religious worldview for both their 'Systematic Study' and 'Textual Studies', as we want students to be exposed to a diversity of perspectives. Therefore we would be happy to see a statement added saying that students may only study a non-religious worldview if they have not done so in their 'systematic study of one religion or non-religious worldview' (and by implication, vice versa).

In terms of the content of 'Textual Studies':

13. *Specifications should prescribe the study of clearly referenced texts from one religion or non-religious worldview...*

...

15. At AS and A level this includes the study of:

- *selected text(s) or substantial passages in translation from a particular ~~religious~~ work or corpus of scripture, examining the meaning of the material, its literary features, ideas, authorship and audience and its relationship with other texts and/or sources of wisdom and authority from the religion or non-religious worldview.*

- *legal/ theological/ ethical content and the role of a text or texts in ~~religious~~-law making and codes for living*
- ...
- *the ways in which the text(s) are interpreted and used by ~~religious~~-communities and how these have changed over time*
- *the religious or non-religious, cultural and other significance of the text(s) including its reception and influence beyond ~~a~~ its religious or non-religious community*

16. *In addition at A level this includes the study of:*

- ...
- *the scientific and historical-critical challenges to the authority of texts and ~~religious~~ responses to these*
- *modern critical scholarship including different contemporary approaches, religious and non-religious, to the primary text or corpus, and the religious, non-religious or intellectual assumptions that underpin them*
- *how textual interpretations have, over time, influenced and been influenced by developments in philosophical, ethical and social scientific studies of religion or non-religious worldviews or developments in religious or non-religious thought (as set out above for systematic study of religion)*

The general requirements in paragraphs 17-20 should also be amended to use inclusive language.

## **Annex 4: What a Part One annex on Humanism might look like**

### **Humanism**

All specifications must cover the following core knowledge and understanding, which represents 100% of the content for Part One.

#### **Beliefs and teachings**

- definitions of 'Humanism' including that it is a recent label for a type of non-religious worldview often found in history but not necessarily a self-identity
- reason, evidence, and scientific investigation as the way to discover truth about reality, including the origins of human life, evolution and the big bang
- Humanists' belief that there is no evidence for the existence of gods or the supernatural and are atheists or agnostics; Epicurus and the problem of evil
- the belief that death is the end of personal existence
- the special value of human life as the only life and approaches to death
- how humanists find meaning and purpose in life (the idea of meaning in life as 'created, not discovered') and how these ideas differ to any concept of 'ultimate meaning' in the universe
- the belief that morality originates naturally from living in communities
- the principle of the 'Golden Rule'

#### **Sources of wisdom and authority**

- beliefs about the bases of morality and how moral judgments are made more by reason, empathy, and consideration of consequences than by rules
- individual autonomy and social responsibility as an alternative to religious or other authority
- use of the scientific method to assess truth claims; the source of its authority, and the provisional nature of the knowledge it produces, sources of moral wisdom in humanist and allied ethical thinking, in stories and diverse cultural traditions
- the idea that all texts and literature are human creations and potential sources of wisdom
- humanist ideas as global and perennial from the ancient world to today
- key individuals and their contributions (drawing three examples from Mencius, Epicurus, Aphra Behn, David Hume, J S Mill, Marie Curie, George Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Bertrand Russell)

#### **Practices**

- distinctive motivations for specific altruistic work; non-religious pastoral support including end of life care, celebrancy
- perspectives on social values: openness, cooperation, free inquiry, discussion and participation
- beliefs about the need to challenge tradition and review all personal and social practices as circumstances and knowledge change
- festivals as natural and cultural rather than religious; humanists and Christmas
- approaches to significant rites of passage, including humanist ceremonies – baby namings, weddings, funerals
- the organised humanist movement in Britain and globally

### **Forms of expression and ways of life**

- the pursuit of 'the good life'; acceptance that different individuals' preferences give rise to diversity of ways of living
- advocacy of the secular state as equally welcoming to all religions and beliefs; implications of this idea; what makes some kinds of space special
- the high value placed on individual expression; the lack of any compulsion to participate in organised Humanism
- approaches to health and wellbeing, including 'whole person' ideas of personal development through integrated selves and connections with other people and the natural world
- international expressions of Humanism including use of the 'Happy Human' logo
- perspectives on the treatment of other animals e.g. in food production, medical testing and domestically
- humanist influences in art in depictions of the human person: in Greek Classical Age sculpture, in Dutch Golden Age realist painting, in contemporary portrait photography
- relevant themes in literature by humanists or with humanist inspiration: the poetry of Thomas Hardy and Matthew Arnold, and novels and essays of E M Forster, George Eliot and Philip Pullman
- scientists, their humanist influences and perspectives – historical figures including Marie Curie and T. H. Huxley, twentieth century scientists including Albert Einstein, and contemporaries including Jim Al-Khalili and Alice Roberts

Common and divergent views between humanists in the way beliefs are understood and expressed should be included throughout.