

Stage 3 of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill begins today

An important milestone Senedd meeting on Friday, 29 January 2021 has moved the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill into Stage 3 of the legislative process.

In Friday's end of Stage 2 meeting for the Children, Young People and Education Committee, all of the Education Minister, Kirsty Williams' proposed amendments were agreed. A number of these amendments are of direct relevance to Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) as well as voluntary aided schools of a religious character.

Key agreed amendments

These key agreed amendments included:

- Replacing references to **Great Britain** with 'Wales';
- Making amendments relating to representation on **group/committee A on SACREs** – group / committee A is amended to include “non-religious philosophical convictions” as well as ‘Christian denominations and other religions and denominations of such religions’. In addition, the number of members appointed to represent a religion, denomination or non-religious philosophical conviction “shall, so far as consistent with the efficient discharge of the group’s functions, reflect broadly the proportionate strength of that religion, denomination or non-religious philosophical conviction in the area,” and “all reasonable steps to secure [this] outcome” should be made by the local authority. Local authorities in Wales also must have regard to any guidance given by Welsh ministers in this respect. In discussion, Kirsty Williams clarified that representative members of ‘philosophical convictions’ would sit alongside but separate from other members of the group who represented religions and their denominations, so there would be only one group. This has related implications for each SACRE’s **Agreed Syllabus Conference**.
- Making amendments relating to an **agreed syllabus for RVE** adopted by an Agreed Syllabus Conference to ensure that the syllabus reflects the fact that a range of non-religious philosophical convictions are held in Wales, as well as continuing to ensure that the agreed syllabuses reflect that the religious traditions in Wales are mainly Christian and taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Wales.
- Making amendments relating to teaching and learning of **RVE for post-16 learners** in Wales which reflect the fact the religious traditions in Wales are mainly Christian, taking into account the teaching and practices of other principle religions represented in Wales, and a range of non-religious philosophical convictions held in Wales.
- Making amendments relating to RVE in **voluntary aided schools** of a religious character – voluntary aided schools of a religious character are required “to provide for the teaching and learning of non-denominational RVE that ‘has regard to’ the agreed syllabus (rather than RVE that ‘accords with’ the RVE syllabus).”

(Taken from the notices of amendments and the purpose and effect tables.)

Other interesting discussion content

Other interesting information emerging from the content of the debate includes discussion of Kirsty Williams' position on:

- how the Welsh Government understands the term '**convictions**' – it follows existing understanding of 'convictions' as found in case law in order to follow common usage and avoid confusion by introducing a different understanding.
- the publication timeline for the **Framework for Religion, Values and Ethics** – the final guidance will be published before the end of 2021, and there will be no change to the timetable because of the necessity of proper consultation;
- the term '**have regard**' in legislation, and intended impact on school practice;
- **diversity** being embedded across the curriculum and not just in the humanities' AoLE;
- **mental health and emotional well-being** of learners (and teachers), which should be central to decision-making within the whole curriculum.

[Watch the debate on Senedd.tv](#) (a relevant 20-minute extract of the debate for RVE is 1h 45m – 2h 5m as well as 2h 48m onwards for the 'have regard' discussion).

Stage 3 of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill involves the plenary consideration of amendments, and the relevant dates will be published in due course. A revised memorandum of the decisions made in Friday's meeting will be published at least five days before the Stage 3 proceedings.

Explore the relevant papers

- Bill's notices of amendments tabled on [16 December 2020](#) (includes schools of a religious character) and [20 January 2021](#) (includes RVE and SACREs).
- Full [marshalled list](#) of amendments for the meeting.
- Purpose and effect tables for amendments [16 December 2020](#) and [20 January 2021](#).
- [Section 390](#) of the Education Act 1996 (for information).

Watch the debate

[Recorded Children, Young People and Education Committee meeting on 29 January 2021](#) (interesting 20-minute extract is from 1h 45m – 2h 5m as well as 2h 48m onwards for the 'have regard' discussion).

What is the background to the Bill?

The Curriculum and Assessment Bill is concerned with establishing "a new and reformed legislative framework to support the implementation of new curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales" (Senedd Cymru).

Education Minister, Kirsty Williams initiated the Welsh Government Bill and the Business Committee has given responsibility to the Children, Young People and Education Committee.

We reported on Stage 1 of the Bill in our blog news on [6 January](#), where we linked to the 66 recommendations made by the Children, Young People and Education Committee in its report on the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Bill, some of which were directly related to RE / RVE and SACREs.

After the end of the Stage 1 vote for members of the Senedd on 15 December in favour of the continued progression of the Bill through the legislative process, the Bill moved into Stage 2, which ended with Friday's meeting.

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