

Provision of Educational Resources to Support Qualifications

This paper is prepared in the context of discussion at the meeting of the Children, Young People and Education Committee on 2 May 2018.

1. Locus for an awarding body in relationships with textbook providers

WJEC is not a textbook publisher but we do seek to nurture the interest of publishers in order to ensure that suitable textbooks are available to support our qualifications.

When a publisher shows an interest, our relationship is based on guidance which have their origins in the regulatory field. Therefore, rather than having a relationship based on a commercial agreement, it is a process based on “endorsement” that is in place.

Within that endorsement process, WJEC and the publisher will agree a timeline for reading an outline of the material and for reading the second proof that includes all diagrams/indexes etc.. This is not equivalent to having a detailed agreement in place between WJEC and the publisher for the whole authoring and production process and therefore if the publisher encounters difficulty in terms of adhering to the timeline then WJEC has no contractual powers to intervene.

Although this is the current situation, as its origins are in the regulatory regime for “three country qualifications” it is not necessarily the case that this is the best arrangement in relation to providing resources in two languages in the context of curriculum and qualifications developments that are specific to Wales.

In addition to this, for Welsh-medium versions of textbooks, WJEC provides a service that supports publishers in the process of providing these volumes (specifically through the provision of a full editorial service and arranging the translation process). We receive funding support from the Welsh Government for this aspect of work.

2. Range of educational resources provided by WJEC

Although we are not a publisher, WJEC’s mission includes “*producing resources and development opportunities of quality that meet the lifelong learning needs of students and their teachers*”. In order to do this efficiently, and in order to support the increasing use of digital resources for teaching and learning purposes, we place an emphasis on providing a wide range of digital resources that are available free of charge via WJEC’s public website.

For a specific qualification, the specification and specimen assessment materials are the only resources we need to provide for regulatory purposes. But our range of digital resources for learning is much broader than this, including a substantial “Guidance for Teaching” and a range of individual resources, especially for those parts of a specification that are new.

3. Origin and nature of difficulties in relation to GCE Religious Studies

In general, the main factor causing difficulty for publishers in terms of their timetable for moving ahead with their work is the regulatory timeline for approving qualifications, in particular the amount of time available before the start of teaching. This has been a stumbling block for several subjects within the reform timeline that was drawn up by the Welsh Government towards the end of the period when it was the regulator for qualifications in Wales (that timeline being very similar to that used for reform of qualifications in England).

However, in relation to textbooks for GCSE and A level Religious Studies, it seems that additional factors have had an effect on the two publishers that have been undertaking this work.

One of the key problems is the dependence on a small number of authors, to the extent that the same authors were leading on resources for the AS units (year 12) and for the A2 units (year 13). The work on the AS units was late being started because of the accreditation timetable, and there was a need for those to be completed before starting the work on the A2 units. Ideally, 18-24 months should be allowed for the process of producing printed resources of quality, especially when there are fundamental changes to a specification so that less dependence can be placed on adapting previously available resources.

4. The scope of what we provide digitally for GCE Religious Studies

GCE Religious Studies also happens to be one of the subjects for which we have made the largest investment in digital resources.

Our **Guidance for Teaching** (153 pages) is itself amongst the most substantial that we have ever produced, providing very substantial details about the requirements. Two examples of this are provided at **Annexe 1** to this paper. The Guidance also provides an extensive listing of useful reference books and websites for each theme.

As the textbook provider has designed its plan based in the units of the course, there are some units with so few candidates that provision of a textbook would not be viable. In those cases, digital provision is absolutely necessary.

To accompany the Guidance for Teaching, we also provide a **Glossary of Key Terms** (36 pages) which provides substantial detail for the less familiar terms, as is exemplified at **Annexe 2**.

In terms of individual digital resources for GCE Religious Studies, there are substantial units for Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam a Sikhism, Crefydd a Moeseg ac Athroniaeth Crefydd a hefyd unedau ar y themau penodol canlynol: Intuitionsim, Emotivism, Naturalism, Utilitarianism, Situation ethics, Aquinas' Natural Law, Divine command theory, Ethical egoism, Virtue theory, Arguments for God's existence, Religious Experience, the Problem of evil and suffering. It should be emphasised that each of these is more than an individual resource but is a collection of relevant resources for the theme.

We also place emphasis within our resources on Assessment Objective 2 (analysis and evaluation) which carries two thirds of the weighting at the A2 level (year 13) within the reformed specification. Emphasis on this Assessment Objective is not typically provided within textbooks (which tend to concentrate on content) and we have therefore also provided exemplars of responses to Assessment Objectives 1 and 2.

5. Looking forward

Looking forward to a period when there will be a need to provide resources that are increasingly specific to the requirements of Wales, we have through discussion with stakeholders identified two strands of work that would be useful to progress, i.e. (i) nurturing the interest of publishers in Wales and (ii) researching the actual usage of resources (across a spectrum that reaches from interactive digital to textbooks).

Welsh Government has indicated that it is able to consider the provision of an element of funding support for these two intentions, and therefore the following steps are underway:

- (i) We have outlined a programme for discussion seminars with publishers, i.e.
 - the demand: background and nature of the next developments in relation to curriculum and qualifications, the demand for resources, range of media (from digital to print), position in terms of terminology and language register for different age groups,
 - challenges of responding to demand – the challenge of authoring, parallel production in two languages, use of translation technology, nurturing skills and stabilising capacity, dealing with copyright, blend between print and digital,
 - business models – possibilities in terms of the nature of grant aid, nature of contracts, distribution of work across a period of time, support from WJEC, support from Welsh Books Council,
- (ii) We have invited tenders for research work (closing date 24 April), with the intention of identifying what use is made of resources provided to support teaching and learning in Key Stages 3, 4, and 5. We wish to understand current usage of resources so that we plan purposefully for the future taking into account style, availability, print/digital balance, flexibility, etc. Specifically, there is a need to research:
 - the use made of various kinds of resources in the classroom and beyond
 - the factors which influence the use of resources, e.g. fitness for purpose, content, language register, style, medium (digital/print), cost.The resources will include Welsh medium and English medium educational resources.

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April 2018

Examples from the “Guidance for Teaching” document

Theme 1: New Testament literature – Parables

This theme provides candidates with an introduction to the literary genre of parables that are found in the New Testament gospels. Three parables (the prodigal son, the great banquet, the sower) are to be studied in depth.

1A. Parables – types and characteristics

This section focuses on the types and characteristics of New Testament parables. It is recognised that different scholars have classified parables in a variety of ways. Candidates are expected to be familiar with John Dominic Crossan's classification of parables four main types (riddle parables, example parables, attack parables, challenge parables). These four types are explained in his book *The Power of Parable: How fiction by Jesus became fiction about Jesus*. It is expected that candidates will apply this classification to the three set text parables. Candidates can if they wish, refer to other New Testament parables, but this is not a requirement of the specification. Candidates will also be expected to identify the main literary characteristics of New Testament parables and exemplify from the set texts.

1B. Parables – purposes and interpretations

Section B introduces candidates to the main purposes and interpretations of New Testament parables, applying these studies to the three set text parables. It is expected that candidates will be aware of Robert H. Stein's contribution to this area (*An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus*). An important understanding of the purpose of parables is in Mark 4:10-12 and it is expected that candidates should be able to make reference to this. Candidates should have an understanding of methods of interpretation including the extent to which the parables should be seen as allegories. Candidates should be familiar with the view that parables have undergone change in meaning from that which Jesus meant originally when he uttered the parable to his listeners in the first century, through changes in the oral period, to the interpretation that the gospel writers gave the parables. In addition, candidates should be aware of the developments in religious language in the philosophy of religion that have influenced and been influenced by the study of parables.

1C. Close study of New Testament texts (parables)

This section requires candidates to consider aspects of the set text parables, including their historical origins (e.g. the extent to which the parables are original to Jesus and reflect the life and customs of first century Palestine); their structure (e.g. form of the parable and its key characters); and possible theological messages of the parables (e.g. what they teach about the Kingdom of God).

Candidates should carefully consider the issues for analysis and evaluation that arise out of the AO1 content, including those listed in the final row of each page of the specification.

Unit 3 Buddhism Theme 2

2A. Historical development of Buddhism in Japan

Candidates should be able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of: the development of key Buddhist traditions in Japan - Zen, Pure Land and Nichiren - with particular reference to their central practices. The koan is a paradoxical statement used as a practice in Zen traditions designed to make the mind despair of logic and take a leap into an intuitive understanding of reality. The nembutsu (going for refuge in Amida/Amitabha Budha) in Pure Land traditions is an expression of thanks to Amida for providing the conditions for enlightenment after death in the Pure Land, because enlightenment (in contrast to Zen belief) is not achievable through self-power. The daimoku is a mantra used in Nichiren traditions which expresses the taking of refuge in the name of the Lotus Sutra, the central sutra of Nichiren Buddhism.

2B. Responses to the challenges from science

Candidates will explore presentations of Buddhism as avoiding 'blind faith' and emphasising the realisation of truth in experience (with reference to the Kalama Sutta v.9 & 10 <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an03/an03.065.soma.html> Thera Soma translation). They will contrast these with Asian Buddhist worldviews populated with a diversity of beings and realms (for example six realms or rebirth, popular beliefs in spirits and hungry ghosts (pretas). Taken as a whole, Buddhism contains teachings which seem to emphasise rationalism, and also to contain teachings about a multiverse richly populated with diverse spiritual beings with supernatural powers. Candidates will also explore the Dalai Lama's positive assessment of the value of science, exemplified in his founding of the Mind and Life Institute <https://www.mindandlife.org/>.

2C. Responses to the challenges from secularisation

Candidates should explore Buddhism's frequent presentation in the West as a secular philosophy, with reference to Stephen Batchelor (a Buddhist Atheist) and his presentation of Buddhism as a rational philosophy and way of life. They should consider the extent to which Batchelor's view of Buddhism is a distortion to suit a Western world view. They might refer in general terms to the following texts: Batchelor, S. (1998). *Buddhism Without Beliefs: A Contemporary Guide to Awakening* (Riverhead Books), Batchelor, S. (2011) *Confession of a Buddhist Atheist* (Spiegel & Grau), Batchelor, S. (2015) *After Buddhism: Rethinking the Dharma for a Secular Age* (Yale University Press). Candidates should engage critically with Batchelor's presentation of Buddhism. To contrast with Batchelor they may consider another the approach of another Western teacher, David Brazier, who claims Buddhism is a religion. Brazier, D. (2014). *Buddhism is a Religion: You Can Believe It* (Woodsmoke Press).

Examples from the “Glossary of Terms” document

Abidhamma pitaka	The third section of the Pali Canon, containing learned commentaries on the teachings.
Amaravati	Theravada Monastery of the Thai Forest Tradition in Hertfordshire, run by the English Sangha Trust.
Amida	The Buddha of infinite light and life, devotion to whom ensures rebirth in his pure land after death; he is the main buddha revered by the Pure Land School.
Amitabha (Skt)	As Amida – above. Also one of the five dhyani buddhas.
arhat (Skt) arahant (P)	‘Worthy’. In Theravada Buddhism, the highest state attainable.
atman (Skt)	The eternal soul in Hinduism
bhavachakra	The Tibetan wheel of life, sometimes called the ‘Wheel of Samsara’.
Bodhi Tree	The devotional name given to the pipal/banyan/fig tree under which tradition states Siddhartha became enlightened.
Bon	Indigenous Tibetan religion
buddha-nature	In Mahayana Buddhism, the underlying state of all things, therefore the potential of all beings.
Buddhist Society	Founded in 1924 by Christmas Humphreys, the Society is a UK Charity founded to publish and make known the principles of Buddhism
Chithurst	Branch of Amaravati Monastery.
concept	Something conceived in the mind; a thought or notion.
daimoku	The practice of chanting ‘namu myoho renge kyo’ (I take refuge in the Lotus Sutra) performed by Nichiren Buddhists.
Dalai Lama	Spiritual and political leader of the Tibetan people, in exile. The Dalai Lama is a ‘tulku’ (preserver of a particular lineage) of the Gelug tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, and is considered to be a manifestation of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva. The present Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, is the fourteenth. ‘Dalai’ means ocean of wisdom, and a lama is a teacher.
Ekayana (Skt)	Literally ‘one way’. A theme of the Lotus Sutra which promotes the bodhisattva path to enlightenment.
enlightenment for all	A principle expounded in the Lotus Sutra and recognised in many forms of Mahayana Buddhism that there are no monastic pre-requisites for the attainment of enlightenment.
gohonzon	‘Object of worship’: the inscription of the daimoku.