



National Certificate of Educational Achievement
TAUMATA MĀTAURANGA Ā-MOTU KUA TAEA

Review of Religious Studies achievement standards

Introduction

The Ministry of Education, in association with NZQA, is reviewing the Levels 1-3 Religious Studies achievement standards. The focus of this review is to ensure that the standards meet quality design principles for achievement standards and recognise worthwhile outcomes that relate to *The New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC).

Purpose

The purpose of this project includes:

- developing L1-3 standards aligned with the outcomes from curriculum levels 6-8
- addressing any duplication of standards issues
- addressing any credit parity issues.

Principles guiding review

The process has been guided by:

- the direction of the NZC – in particular the vision, values, principles, and key competencies and the conceptual strands of the Social Sciences learning area
- the Principles for Standards Review.

The principles guiding the standards review can be summarised as follows.

- A standard must be derived from a curriculum or established body of knowledge.
- A standard must have a clear purpose.
- A standard must allow valid and reliable assessment.
- Grade distinctions (between A, M and E) must be based on qualitative differences in achievement. Grade distinctions should not be based on the candidate being required to acquire and retain more subject-specific knowledge.
- Credit Parity - one credit should reflect a notional 10 hours of learning, practice and assessment for an average candidate.
- Standards should not duplicate one another. Duplication occurs when the central knowledge/skills, understandings, and competencies specified for a standard are all largely similar to those of another standard.

In addition to this, the following decisions have been made.

- All standards derived from learning areas in the NZC will be achievement standards (and not necessarily limited to 24 credits per level).
- The numbers of standards assessed in an external time bound written examination at any one level will be limited to three per subject. Independent advice from assessment experts clearly indicates that for valid assessment in such examinations a candidate needs a minimum of one hour for each standard.

Development of Levels 1-3 Religious Studies standards

These achievement standards were originally developed in 2007 and 2008 and are now due for review to ensure that they continue to be fit for purpose.

Nature of Religious Studies standards

The Religious Studies standards have been developed for a diverse Aotearoa New Zealand and need to be able to be used by all schools and all students – those with a specific religious affiliation as well as by those who have none, but wish to acquire knowledge and understanding of religions. This is viewed as important in the context of globalisation and of the migration of people of different faiths and cultures to Aotearoa New Zealand. Understanding religions contributes to understanding how belief systems function in societies and to the fostering of an inclusive society in Aotearoa New Zealand that reflects the histories and traditions of all its people.

Statement on religious diversity

New Zealand is a country of many faiths, with a significant minority who profess no religion. Increasing religious diversity is a significant feature of public life.

Source: Human Rights Commission website: The NZ Diversity Action Programme: [National Statement on Religious Diversity](#)

Religious Studies Curriculum

Schools that offer learning programmes that are assessed against Religious Studies standards will develop their own school-based curriculum to:

- reflect their religious, sociological, and/or philosophical approach to the teaching of Religious Studies
- meet the interests and learning needs of their students
- assist students in developing their personal and vocational pathways
- support the aspirations of family, whānau, and the school's local community.

Addressing Credit Parity

The decisions made regarding credit parity are based on the guideline of one credit representing ten notional hours of learning time derived from current research. The allocation of six credits to each standard has been retained.

External and Internal Assessment

It is currently being proposed that all the standards continue to be assessed internally because this provides more opportunity for authentic assessment activities to be developed that relate to relevant religious contexts.

Rationale for Changes to Religious Studies Achievement Standards June 2013

What Has Changed?

Most of the standards have a change in title, with corresponding changes to the achievement criteria for each grade. These changes have been made to simplify the language used, and to ensure that there is greater clarity about the outcome being assessed for each standard at each grade. For consistency and clarity of progression across the levels, the title of the Level 1 standards retain 'describe' as the outcome, the title of the Level 2 standards now all start with 'explain', and the Level 3 standards use 'analyse'.

The grade descriptors within each standard have been expanded and clarified to give further guidance to assessors beyond the current wording of 'breadth' and/or 'depth', which was identified as an issue for users of the standards.

Explanatory notes have been reworded as necessary for clarity, to ensure they use religiously-neutral terminology wherever possible, and to include examples from a wider range of religious traditions.

Other explanatory notes have been re-structured to reflect the most recent template requirements, and to remove information relating to teaching programmes and assessment conditions. Information relating to assessment is now included within the new Conditions of Assessment that have been developed for each level.

AS1.1 *Describe the purpose of a sacred text within a religious tradition*

There is a shift from focusing on key features to considering the purpose of the sacred text (as expressed through key features such as literary techniques and genre). There is now a clearer progression to AS2.1 (meanings within a sacred text) and AS3.1 (significant theme within a sacred text).

AS1.2 *Describe a significant development within a religious tradition*

The title and achievement criteria have been reworded to express a single key outcome. The intent and purpose of the standard have not changed.

AS1.3 *Describe the application of the key ethical principle(s) of a religious tradition to an issue*

The title and achievement criteria have been reworded to express a single key outcome, which is to describe how a religious tradition's key ethical principle(s) are applied to an issue. Students are still expected to describe the key ethical principle(s).

AS1.4 *Describe key beliefs of a religious tradition*

The achievement criteria have been reworded to ensure that they express a step-up in the quality of evidence required for Merit and Excellence, and do not require additional evidence. Students are still expected to describe the significance of the key beliefs within the religious tradition for Merit and Excellence.

AS2.1 *Explain the meanings in a sacred text within a religious tradition*

The title and achievement criteria have been reworded to clarify the intent of the standard.

AS2.2 *Explain the changes in an expression of a religious tradition*

No changes have been made to the title or achievement criteria. The intent and purpose of the standard have not changed.

AS2.3 *Explain how a contemporary social action derives from the ethical principles of a religious tradition*

The title and achievement criteria have been reworded to clarify the focus of this standard, so that it links clearly with ethical principles of a religious tradition to ensure progression from AS1.3 and then to AS3.3. Students are expected to explain how the ethical principles of a religious tradition give rise to the contemporary social action.

AS2.4 *Explain the key beliefs within two religious traditions in relation to a significant religious question*

The title and achievement criteria have been reworded to clarify the intent of the standard. Students are expected to explain the key beliefs of two religious traditions in relation to the same significant religious question. The key beliefs of each of the two religious traditions are likely to be different.

AS3.1 *Analyse a significant theme in a sacred text within a religious tradition*

The title has had a minor wording addition, and the achievement criteria have been reworded to ensure that it is the quality of the analysis overall that is stepped-up for Merit and Excellence, not just the extent of the supporting evidence.

AS3.2 *Analyse a religious tradition(s) in Aotearoa New Zealand*

The title and achievement criteria have been reworded to broaden the focus from religious expression in Aotearoa New Zealand, to allow students to focus on wider aspects of a religious tradition or traditions. The analysis may focus on one religious tradition, more than one religious tradition or on religion in general.

AS3.3 *Analyse the response of a religious tradition to a contemporary ethical issue*

While the title and achievement criteria have had minor rewording (a change from 'examine' to 'analyse'), the intent and purpose of this standard are unchanged.

AS3.4 *Analyse the key beliefs of a religious tradition and a secular world view in relation to an ultimate question(s)*

The title and achievement criteria have been reworded, to require that the analysis of the key beliefs of a religious tradition and a secular world view is related back to an ultimate question or questions. It is likely that, within the analysis, students will still compare and contrast the key beliefs of a religious tradition and a secular world view.