

# Religious Education at second level

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Human development is the development of the awareness of self as separate and unique, with the capacity for reflection, imagination and creativity; open to ideas of truth, goodness, and beauty. From earliest times, the experience of the spiritual and the human search for meaning have frequently found expression in a religious interpretation of life. The history of humanity has been indelibly marked by the contributions of religious traditions. In Ireland, Christianity is part of our rich cultural heritage and has played a significant role in shaping our vision of ourselves, our world, and our relationships with others. However, effective functioning in an increasingly complex culture demands that individuals have an understanding of a variety of religious traditions, and an appreciation of the richness of the major religious traditions encountered not just in Ireland, but in Europe and in the wider global context. Increasingly, modern culture also calls for engagement with the secular response to human experience. While the whole curriculum built around the principles of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes, is concerned with promoting personal growth and facilitating the spiritual development of students, religious education is well placed to provide students with opportunities for reflection on human experience, as well as for understanding and interpretation of that experience. Such opportunities encourage the students' participation in their own conscious and critical development.

The aim of Junior Cycle Religious Education is to provide students with a framework for encountering and engaging with the variety of religious traditions in Ireland and elsewhere. Such a framework would also prepare students for the Leaving Certificate course in Religious Education. The syllabus for the Junior Certificate, in common with the range of subjects offered at this level, invites the students to reflect on their own experiences. The students' own experience of religion and their commitment to a particular religious tradition, and/or to a continuing search for meaning, will therefore be encouraged and supported.

Junior Cycle Religious Education seeks to promote an understanding and appreciation of why people believe, as well as tolerance and respect for the values and beliefs of all. The syllabus is built around a framework of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes. As part of a programme of preparation for the responsibilities of citizenship, the course makes particular reference to the Christian tradition, acknowledging the unique role of this tradition and its denominational expressions in Irish life.

Religious Education should ensure that students are exposed to a broad range of religious traditions and to the non-religious interpretation of life. It has a particular role to play in the curriculum in the promotion of tolerance and mutual understanding. It seeks to develop in students the skills needed to engage in meaningful dialogue with those of other, or of no, religious traditions. Religious Education, in offering opportunities to develop an informed and critical understanding of the Christian tradition in its historical origins and its cultural and social expressions, should be part of a curriculum that seeks to promote the critical and cultural development of the person in his or her social and personal life. Religious Education makes a significant contribution to a curriculum that seeks to provide for the moral development of students. It introduces a variety of ethical codes and norms for behaviour. Students are encouraged to engage critically with these moral systems in an effort to arrive at

a thought-through moral stance that will serve as a foundation for the decisions they will face as adults and for the patterns of behaviour and commitment that will mark how they will relate to their local communities and to the world in general. In summary, Religious Education can justly claim to be an integral part of any curriculum that aims to promote the holistic development of the person in the light of the stated aims of education. The assessment and certification of an Religious Education syllabus at national level would provide students and society with certificated statements of achievement based on the knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes implicit in that syllabus.

**(adapted from the Dept of Education and Science guidelines for Religious Education)**

**For the full curriculum on Religious education from the department of education and science click on the link**

[www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/.../JCSEC22\\_religion\\_syllabus.pdf](http://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/.../JCSEC22_religion_syllabus.pdf)

**For more information on Education at second level visit [www.catholicschools.ie](http://www.catholicschools.ie) or click on the link below**

<http://www.catholicschools.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Catholic-education-at-second-level.pdf>

### **RE Congress**

**The national congress for religious education will take place in the Mater Dei Institute on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2015. The theme of this year's conference is 'Engaging the heart' and will focus on helping our student to become more mindful of what it means to live with a sense of the spiritual and to be aware of God's constant love in their lives**

**For more information on the RE congress click on the following link**

<http://www.recongress.ie/>

## Resources

**Click on the links below to access resources to assist in the teaching and learning of religious education at second level**

<http://www.religionforliving.com>

<http://diocesesre.weebly.com>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/rs>

<http://www.pdst.ie/sc/religiouseducation>

<http://www.knowtheway.ie/teacher-resources .aspx>

<https://www.tes.co.uk/secondary-teaching-resources>

<https://www.studyclix.ie>

<http://www.teachnet.ie>

<https://www.faithconnect.ie>

