

## Discussion Proposal

### Religious Education (RE) Qualifications for RE Teachers in Catholic Schools

Discussion paper written by Mike Nolan (Manager, Catholic Education Office)

**To: Principals - Primary & Secondary Schools**

**Directors of Religious Studies - Primary & Secondary Schools**

**Boards of Trustees - Primary & Secondary Schools**

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## Response Timeframe

Please respond to the writer ([mnolan@chch.catholic.org.nz](mailto:mnolan@chch.catholic.org.nz)) by Friday 27 March 2015.

## Our Challenge

Our collective leadership challenge is to support our Bishop and the New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference (NZCBC) by finding a structure and support mechanism that will ensure the attaining of approved RE qualifications in the shortest yet most manageable timeframe for the maximum number of RE teachers currently teaching in our Catholic schools in the Diocese of Christchurch.

## Background

This discussion proposal paper arises from the reflection by the author on two important documents signposting, and one personal challenge for, the next steps in the ongoing evolution and strengthening of our system of Catholic schools:

1. The Catholic Education of School-Age Children – New Zealand Catholic Bishops’ Conference, January 2014.
2. National Report on Teacher Professional Development and Qualifications in Religious Education (RE) and Catholic Character - New Zealand Catholic Education Office (NZCEO), October 2014.
3. The personal input and challenge from Bishop Barry Jones to Catholic principals at the Catholic Principals’ Day – November 2014.

## Introduction

The following quotations set the scene and summarise the basis for the author’s reflections as laid out in this discussion paper:

“The Catholic school system in New Zealand is blessed with many outstanding Catholic educators, but there are not enough people available with the right formation and qualifications to staff all schools adequately in terms of the Catholic character. For this reason we intend that research will be carried out into the levels of qualifications of teachers of religious education, with a view to improving the current situation through the provision of easily accessible courses which lead to qualifications.”<sup>1</sup>

“The development of a well qualified teaching force is central to the Bishops’ vision for Catholic schools.”<sup>2</sup>

“While both professional development and study towards qualifications can feed to certification, certification is not itself a formal qualification.”<sup>3</sup>

“We are at the beginning stages in ensuring that teachers have appropriate qualifications in Catholic Character and Religious Education, not simply certification and professional development. Boards need to work with school leadership to develop plans and strategies for this”<sup>4</sup>

At the Catholic Principals’ Day on Friday 7 November 2014, Bishop Barry Jones provided his personal challenge to principals in the Diocese of Christchurch to begin thinking about how we can ensure that our teachers of RE obtain appropriate qualifications for their teaching of our prime curriculum subject, religious education.

## Current Situation

The NZCBC is asking us to build on our current situation. In particular, our Bishops are collectively asking teachers of RE, in the first instance, to gain a recognised qualification. We are, in the view of the writer, well positioned to meet this challenge.

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<sup>1</sup> 49. Catholic Education of School-Age Children, p. 12

<sup>2</sup> National Report on Teacher Professional Development and Qualifications in RE and Catholic Character, p. 1

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 2

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 4

A NZCBC approved and recognised RE teaching qualification is able to be obtained by a teacher undertaking the Catholic Institute of Aotearoa New Zealand (TCI) courses offered by the diocese.

We are greatly blessed by our Bishop agreeing to pay for all teachers who undertake TCI courses; i.e. there is no cost to schools.

Bishop Barry takes this approach as he is strongly committed to ensuring quality RE teaching in our Catholic schools and he wishes to do all he can to remove all possible barriers to teachers obtaining RE qualifications. In 2014 the cost of a TCI course to the Diocese is \$72.87 per course plus a one-off student services fee of \$8.70. In 2015 the cost of a TCI course to the Diocese will \$95.60 per course.

We have a significant number of teachers who have taken up the challenge of undertaking the TCI courses in the Diploma in Religious Studies (RE stream) and a number of these teachers have completed the assignments associated with the courses and are well on their way to completing, or indeed have completed, the end qualification of the Diploma in Religious Studies (RE stream).

There is also a significant number of teachers who have enrolled in and completed the 18 hours class contact time for each TCI courses in the Diploma in Religious Studies (RE stream) but have not undertaken the associated assignment with each course and thus are yet to commence their journey towards gaining the qualification of the Diploma in Religious Studies (RE stream).

We also have a number of people who are well on their way to completing, or indeed have completed, a Bachelor of Theology and/or masters level qualifications– either the Master of Educational Leadership (MEdL) or the Master of Religious Education (MRE) from the Australian Catholic University.

TCI is currently negotiating with NZQA to secure a Certificate in Religious Studies (RE stream).

It is anticipated that this Certificate in Religious Studies would consist of the six level one courses that precede the 5 level two courses required for the awarding of the Diploma in Religious Studies (RE stream) plus one other professional experience course (most likely the Understanding Sexuality course; a course that 206 teachers have already undertaken in our Diocese).

The six level one courses are:

- RE 101 Introduction to Religious Education
- RE 102 Spirituality for Teachers
- SC 101 Introduction to the Old Testament
- SC 102 Introduction to the New Testament
- TH 101 Introduction to Catholicism
- TH 102 Introduction to Theology

It is anticipated that this Certificate in Religious Studies will become the baseline qualification that the NZCBC will require all teachers of RE to attain.

The Catholic Education Office (CEO) offers a variety of options for the delivery of TCI courses throughout the Diocese. For example, in 2014 we taught one 18-hour TCI course in each of the following regions in various time frames:

<b>Greymouth</b>	Friday 14 March	4.15pm - 7.15pm
	Saturday 15 March	9.00am - 4.00pm
	Friday 3 April	4.15pm - 7.15pm
	Saturday 4 April	9.00am - 4.00pm
<b>Temuka</b>	Thursday 29 May	4.00pm - 7.00pm
	Friday 30 May	9.00am - 4.00pm
	Thursday 12 June	4.00pm - 7.00pm
	Thursday 19 June	4.00pm - 7.00pm
	Thursday 26 June	4.00pm - 7.00pm
<b>Ashburton</b>	Wednesday 6 August	5.00pm - 8.00pm
	Wednesday 13 August	5.00pm - 8.00pm
	Wednesday 20 August	5.00pm - 8.00pm
	Wednesday 3 September	5.00pm - 8.00pm
	Wednesday 10 September	5.00pm - 8.00pm
	Wednesday 17 September	5.00pm - 8.00pm
<b>Timaru</b>	Friday 8 August	4.30pm - 7.30pm
	Saturday 9 August	9.00am – 4.00pm
	Thursday 28 August	4.30pm – 7.30pm
	Friday 29 August	9.00am – 4.00pm

The offering within Christchurch city is larger:

### **Christchurch**

Within Christchurch city we taught, in 2014, all six level one courses as well as eight level two courses. The timings for these courses were a mixture of 3-day holiday block courses (9.00am - 4.00pm each day) and 6-session evening courses (mostly in the 5.00pm – 8.00pm time slot).

### **Proposal**

#### **(a) From 2016 onwards:**

If we were to utilise, and collectively commit to, the model of teaching one level one 18-hour TCI course to Christchurch city, as is current practice in the regions, we could have the majority of our teachers of RE attaining the Certificate in Religious Studies within six years.

In other words, no matter where we live in the Diocese, if we collectively commit to undertaking one level one 18-hour TCI course per year for six years (and, importantly, completing the assignment associated with the course) we would, in large measure, attain the challenge and goal the NZCBC has set us.

In the case of Christchurch, I would propose that instead of offering all six level one TCI courses every year we offer one TCI level one course per year but repeat this at three venues (clusters of schools) at three different times and timeframes throughout the year. The times and timeframes would be negotiated annually with the principals' executive.

**By way of example only**, one might have a structure such as this for 2016 in Christchurch city:

TCI Course: RE101 (Introduction to Religious Education)

<b>Venue 1</b>	Friday	4.30pm - 7.30pm
	Saturday	9.00am – 4.00pm
	Thursday	4.30pm – 7.30pm
	Friday	9.00am – 4.00pm (call back day)
<b>Venue 2</b>	Wednesday	5.00pm - 8.00pm (for six consecutive Wednesdays)
<b>Venue 3</b>	Monday - Wednesday	9.00am - 4.00pm (3-day holiday block course)

Venue 1 could be a school in the North East.

Venue 2 could be a school in the South West.

Venue 3 could be the Catholic Education Office.

Or indeed one could follow the model that was used in Temuka (detailed above) this year where there was an evening session and a call back day (teacher only day) and then three after school sessions. There may well be other models that would suit.

**(b) From 2016 onwards:**

If one was to settle on teaching the one level one 18-hour TCI course in Christchurch city and, as is the case already, in the regions, we would then simply need to agree that all participant teachers commit to completing the assignment associated with the course. In this way participant teachers will be heading towards the Certificate in Religious Studies which will become the baseline qualification that the NZCBC will require all teachers of RE to attain.

The CEO lecturers who teach the TCI courses are aware of ensuring the building blocks of the assignment are addressed throughout the course.

The strong advantage the writer sees in this approach is the collective nature of all teachers completing assignments in the knowledge that they are on the RE qualifications pathway and playing their individual part to ensuring a Catholic school system staffed with well qualified teachers of RE.

The writer is of the view that it is also comfort in the knowledge that one is studying and writing one's assignment in collective solidarity with all other teachers in the Diocese.

**(c) From 2016 onwards:**

One might then consider the situation of teachers who have previously attended all 18 hours of a TCI course but did not complete the assignment, i.e. did not take the step that leads to the awarding of the qualification.

The writer would see two possible options for teachers in this situation:

1. The first option would to simply resit the course in solidarity with their teaching school colleagues and then complete the assignment.

2. A second option would be to enrol with TCI as a distance student with lecturer tutorial support. In this option the teacher receives the book of readings and does the journaling that accompanies the book of readings prior to attending a two-hour catch-up session with a CEO lecturer and then completing the assignment for the course.

**(d) From 2016 onwards:**

One might then consider the situation of a teacher who for whatever reason cannot make the course that is set for the year – a less likely case if one has three opportunities in Christchurch. In such cases the teacher could enrol as a full distance student with TCI.

In such a case the Bishop would still pay their course fee.

**(e) From 2015 onwards:**

The writer undertakes to provide each school principal with a qualification map for each RE teacher in their school.

I note that this could be done by the school principal now as they have access to the certification records for the teachers employed in their school.

I enclose a hypothetical copy of such a qualification map for a hypothetical school (see page 9).

**(f) For 2015 ... a thought from Mike:**

If there was agreement with the approach articulated in (a) – (e) above, we could agree to accelerate the process (*in a modified form*) for Christchurch city teachers (and any other teachers who may wish to travel to Christchurch). I say in a modified form because the course structure for 2105 has already been determined and advertised in the TCI prospectus for 2105.

Here's a thought from Mike; working on the premise that there's no time like the present to start!

In 2015 the RE 102 course (Spirituality for Teachers) is a 3-day block course in the first week of the September 2015 holidays (Monday 28, Tuesday 29 and Wednesday 30 September 2105). The lecturer for this course is Cushla O'Connor.

The planned venue for this course was the Catholic Education Office.

Cushla, supported by additional CEO staff, would be happy to present this to a larger group than usual (say 30 – 60 participants) at an appropriate larger venue for plenary input with classrooms for smaller group work (say a secondary school facility).

Your reaction to, and thoughts on, this possibility would be appreciated.

Again, if a teacher was on holiday during this time (Australia beckons for many!) they could enrol as a full distance student with TCI for RE 102 and in that way would be on track with their teaching colleagues. It may well be possible for the CEO to offer a support and question insight workshop for teachers who undertake the distance option.

## Conclusion

As leaders of our Catholic schools one might argue that our most important role is to be a steward of the purpose of our particular Catholic school. Equally we have a collective leadership responsibility to be stewards of the purpose of our system of Catholic schools.

“Catholic education is above all a question of communicating Christ, of helping to form Christ in the lives of others.”<sup>5</sup> The “encounter with Christ and a growing knowledge and understanding of his teaching naturally lead to a “new life characterised by all that is beautiful, good and true; a life of Christian witness nurtured and strengthened within the community of the Lord’s disciples, the Church”. This progression from encounter, to growth in knowledge and to Christian witness is the framework of the disciple’s journey.”<sup>6</sup>

Our leadership challenge at this time in the history of our Catholic school system is to find ways to turn our purpose to impact. This is a big challenge; arguably it is the single most important developmental task we will individually and collectively undertake as Catholic leaders.

This discussion paper restricts itself to the growth in knowledge component of the adult teacher’s/disciple’s journey.

In particular, this discussion paper restricts itself to trying to find an agreed systemic approach to ensuring all current teachers of RE might obtain the six level one TCI courses (plus, in all likelihood, the Understanding Sexuality course) that will comprise the Certificate in Religious Studies.

Our collective leadership challenge is to support our Bishop and the NZCBC by finding a structure and support mechanism that will ensure the attaining of approved RE qualifications in the shortest yet most manageable timeframe for the maximum number of RE teachers currently teaching in our Catholic schools in the Diocese of Christchurch.

This discussion paper is not in any way meant to be definitive. For example, there might be a strong view that we should also offer one or two additional level one papers in Christchurch city to cater for those who want to complete a qualification in a shorter time frame than six years. This paper is offered simply as a discussion starter.

I trust this discussion paper will assist us to discern and implement an agreed practical process that will lead us from purpose to impact.

I look forward to engaging in discussion with you on this matter.

I also invite you to formally respond to the points raised in the paper.

If you see better ways of speedily and collectively addressing the NZCBC’s challenge and requirement for a qualified RE teaching fraternity in our Catholic schools I would very much appreciate receiving such new green field ideas you might propose for further consideration.

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<sup>5</sup> 11. Catholic Education of School-Age Children, p. 5

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., #14. p. 5

Please respond to the writer ([mnolan@chch.catholic.org.nz](mailto:mnolan@chch.catholic.org.nz)) by Friday 27 March 2015.

You are invited to respond individually (e.g. an individual principal/board of trustees) or collectively (e.g. the Catholic primary principals might wish to respond by way of their Executive Committee).

Thanks (in anticipation) for taking time to read and consider the challenges and views expressed in this discussion paper.

**Mike Nolan**  
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**Catholic Education Office**

**(21 November 2014)**

Encl. 1

## Hypothetical Qualifications Map

### A Catholic School

Teacher	Role	Qualification	RE101 Credit Hours	RE101 Assignment Completed	RE102 Credit Hours	RE102 Assignment Completed	SC101 Credit Hours	SC101 Assignment Completed	SC102 Credit Hours	SC101 Assignment Completed	TH101 Credit Hours	TH101 Assignment Completed	TH102 Credit Hours	TH102 Assignment Completed
D Orange	Principal	MEdL	n/a	n/a										
B Apple	DP	Nil	54	Yes	54	Yes	0	No	54	Yes	18	No	0	No
C Banana	DRS	MRE	n/a	n/a										
G Plum	Teacher	Cert RS	54	Yes										
M Pineapple	Teacher	Dip RS*	54	Yes										
R Pune	Teacher	Nil	54	Yes	18	No	0	No	18	No	0	No	0	No

\* see Level Two  
below ...

Teacher	Role	Qualification	RE200 Credit Hours	RE200 Assignment Completed	RE201 Credit Hours	RE201 Assignment Completed	SC202 Credit Hours	SC202 Assignment Completed	SC204 Credit Hours	SC204 Assignment Completed	TH203 Credit Hours	TH203 Assignment Completed	TH204 Credit Hours	TH204 Assignment Completed
D Orange	Principal	MEdL	n/a	n/a										
B Apple	DP	Nil	0	No										
C Banana	DRS	MRE	n/a	n/a										
G Plum	Teacher	Cert RS	0	No										
M Pineapple	Teacher	Dip RS*	72	Yes	72	Yes	0	No	72	Yes	72	Yes	72	Yes
R Pune	Teacher	Nil	0	No	72	Yes	0	No	18	No	0	No	0	No