



Department  
for Education

**Consultation Response Form**

**Consultation closing date: 29 December 2014**

**Your comments must reach us by that date**

**Reformed GCSE and A level subject content  
consultation for religious studies GCSE and  
A level**

**If you would prefer to respond online to this consultation please use the following link: <https://www.education.gov.uk/consultations>**

In July and September this year, the Department consulted on content for a number of subjects, for first teaching in 2016.

We are now seeking views on Religious Studies GCSE and A level subject content, the last remaining subject for first teaching in 2016.

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

If you want all, or any part, of your response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.

If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it to be confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department will process your personal data (name and address and any other identifying material) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

<b>Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reason for confidentiality:	

Name: Pavan Dhaliwal	
Please tick if you are responding on behalf of your organisation.	x
Name of Organisation (if applicable): British Humanist Association	
Address: 39 Moreland Street, London EC1V 8BB	

If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the Ministerial and Public Communications Division by e-mail: [consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk) or by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the Department's ['Contact Us'](#) page.

Please insert an 'x' into one of the following boxes which best describes you as a respondent.

<input type="checkbox"/> Academies	<input type="checkbox"/> Awarding organisations	<input type="checkbox"/> Colleges
<input type="checkbox"/> Employers/business sector	<input type="checkbox"/> Further education	<input type="checkbox"/> Headteachers
<input type="checkbox"/> Higher education	<input type="checkbox"/> Local authorities	<input type="checkbox"/> Organisations representing school teachers and lecturers
<input type="checkbox"/> Parents	<input type="checkbox"/> Schools	<input type="checkbox"/> School governors
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Subject associations	<input type="checkbox"/> Teachers	<input type="checkbox"/> Young people

<p>Please Specify:</p> <p>The British Humanist Association is the national charity working on behalf of non-religious people who seek to live ethical and fulfilling lives on the basis of reason and humanity. We promote Humanism, support and represent the non-religious, and promote a secular state and equal treatment in law and policy of everyone, regardless of religion or belief. Founded in 1896, we have around 30,000 members and supporters, and over 70 local and special interest affiliates.</p> <p>The BHA has a long history of work in education, children's rights and equality, with expertise in the 'religion or belief' strand. We have been involved in policy development around RE for over 60 years. We are a founding member of the RE Council for England and Wales, and our Chief Executive has been a Trustee of that</p>
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organisation since 2006. In recent years, the BHA has also been on the Department for Education steering groups which developed the 2004 non-statutory national framework (to which we gave our named support); the non-statutory programmes of study and attainment targets for key stages 3-5 in 2007; the abandoned level descriptions and key stage 1/2 non-statutory programme of learning in 2010; and the 2010 non-statutory guidance. We were also on the steering group of the 2013 RE Subject Review. Andrew Copson has also sat on similar bodies with Ofsted, Ofqual and the QCDA. We helped to develop Ofsted's guidance on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

We provide materials and advice to parents, governors, students, teachers and academics, for example through <http://www.humanismforschools.org.uk/> and our school volunteers programme. We have made detailed responses to all recent reviews of the school curriculum, and submit memoranda of evidence to parliamentary select committees on a range of education issues.

Our support for RE is also reflected by the fact that many standing advisory councils on RE (SACREs) and agreed syllabus conferences (ASCs) have had humanist representatives (in some cases for decades), including as Chairs and Vice-Chairs. Recent years have seen a rise in the number of humanists who are on SACREs, as documents such as the 2010 RE guidance and 2013 national framework have referred to teaching about non-religious beliefs such as Humanism. As a result almost six out of seven English SACREs now have a humanist representative, the vast majority of locally agreed syllabuses include Humanism to some extent, and many do so to a high level of depth.

## **Summary**

The consultation document states that 'The content... sets out the expectation that students recognise the diverse range of religious and non-religious beliefs represented in Great Britain... This will help to ensure that students develop respect and tolerance for those with different religions and beliefs.' But it is hard to see how this can be achieved if the requirement throughout is to study one or two religions and there is no option to systematically study non-religious worldviews. It seems to us that the proposed subject content makes it impossible for this expectation to be met.

We strongly believe that that non-religious worldviews and Humanism should be included in the subject content to the same extent as each of the principal religions, with the caveats that it should only be possible to study one non-religious worldview and it should not be possible to study non-religious worldviews for the entirety of a qualification. This is because in practice Humanism is the only non-religious worldview that is significantly common to merit an annex in its own right, and we believe all young people should learn about a range of religions and non-religious worldviews.

Such inclusion is important because it logically follows from (and indeed strengthens) all contemporary justifications for the subject; it reflects widespread existing practice; it helps the subject stay relevant to young people; it matches international agreements and standards; and it helps schools meet the Independent School Standards.

We set out at length why we believe non-religious worldviews should be included in the criteria and why an annex on Humanism should be added at GCSE level. In December we ran a public consultation on what this annex should contain – we also discuss this. We suggest what we would want to see changed, in practice, outline the merits of different choices of terminology, and explain what we mean by ‘worldview’.

We are submitting four annexes to this consultation response that should be read alongside it:

1. An outline of why Humanism is included in Religious Education (in more detail)
2. A demonstration of the widespread support for the study of Humanism (including a widely signed letter and further messages of support)
3. Changes we would want to see to the subject content (in detail)
4. What a Part One annex on Humanism might look like

We will also be responding to Ofqual’s consultation, calling for similar changes to ensure the assessment objectives are inclusive in their language.

1 Is the revised GCSE content in religious studies appropriate? Please consider whether:

- there is a suitable level of challenge
- the content reflects what students need to know in order to progress to further academic and vocational education
- the amount of content in the qualification is appropriate and comparable to other reformed GCSEs and, if not, whether you have any suggestions for removing or adding content

- the number of optional pathways through the qualification is suitable and these present comparable levels of challenge
- there is the right balance between breadth and depth of study.

Please provide evidence to support your response.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure
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Comments:

### Summary

We believe that non-religious worldviews and Humanism should be included in the subject content to the same extent as each of the principal religions, with the proviso that any systematic study of a non-religious worldview in either part one or part two should be alongside the systematic study of a religion (i.e. it should not be possible to systematically study two non-religious worldviews in either part, nor should it be possible to only study one non-religious worldview in part two).

This is because in practice there is only one non-religious worldview that is sufficiently common to merit an annex in its own right, namely Humanism; and we strongly support young people learning about a broad range of religions and non-religious worldviews and would not want it to be possible for non-religious worldviews to be the only area of study.

Such inclusion is important because it logically follows from (and indeed strengthens) all contemporary justifications for the subject; it reflects existing practice by schools, locally agreed syllabuses, the REC and RE professionals more generally; it helps the subject stay relevant to young people, many of whom are not religious; it matches international agreements on the study of religions and non-religious worldviews; and it helps schools meet the Independent School Standards' requirement to 'actively promote the fundamental British values of... mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.'

In what follows we have set out at length why we believe non-religious worldviews should be included in the subject content and why an annex on Humanism should be added. In December we ran a public consultation on what this annex should contain – we also discuss this. We have made specific suggestions as to what we would want to see changed, in practice, and how the language can be changed to be inclusive. We have also defined what we mean by 'worldview', and discussed the merits of different choices of terminology (i.e. 'beliefs' vs 'non-religious worldviews'). And we have welcomed the requirement for schools to study at least two religions.

We will also be responding to Ofqual's consultation, calling for similar changes to

ensure the assessment objectives are inclusive in their language.

### **Why non-religious worldviews and Humanism should be included**

We have provided, as annex 1 to this submission, a three page briefing setting out the reasons why Humanism is included in Religious Education, but in summary:

- All the usual contemporary justifications for the subject of RE in the school curriculum – its contribution to social cohesion and mutual understanding, its presentation of a range of answers to questions of meaning and purpose, and its role in the search for personal identity and values – are fatally undermined without the inclusion of humanist perspectives and non-religious students.
- Humanism has long been part of Religious Education and the Religious Education Council has long supported this inclusion. Successive Government documents have recommended the inclusion of non-religious worldviews such as Humanism, and the 2013 Curriculum Framework is as inclusive of teaching about non-religious worldviews as it is of teaching about religions.<sup>1</sup> This is also reflected in locally agreed syllabuses, the vast majority of which include the teaching of Humanism with many having extensive modules dedicated to its study and a comparative level of inclusion as with the principal religions (for example, Westminster's,<sup>2</sup> Brent's,<sup>3</sup> Dorset's,<sup>4</sup> Wandsworth's,<sup>5</sup> Camden's, Islington's,<sup>6</sup> South Gloucestershire's,<sup>7</sup> Hounslow's,<sup>8</sup> the joint Manchester, Salford, Stockport, Tameside and Trafford syllabus,<sup>9</sup> and, produced since the publication of the 2013 framework, Ealing's,<sup>10</sup> Calderdale and Kirklees',<sup>11</sup> Hammersmith and

<sup>1</sup> *A Curriculum Framework for Religious Education in England*, The Religious Education Council of England and Wales, 23 October 2014: <http://resubjectreview.reconcil.org.uk/re-review-report>  
See also 'New RE subject framework makes clear: schools should put non-religious beliefs on equal footing', British Humanist Association, 23 October 2014: <https://humanism.org.uk/2013/10/23/new-re-subject-framework-makes-clear-schools-put-non-religious-beliefs-equal-footing/>

<sup>2</sup> [http://webfronter.com/westminster/RE/mnu4/images/WASVersion\\_Friday-Dec-18-2009.pdf](http://webfronter.com/westminster/RE/mnu4/images/WASVersion_Friday-Dec-18-2009.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [http://brent.gov.uk/media/946060/agreed\\_syllabus\\_for\\_religious\\_education.pdf](http://brent.gov.uk/media/946060/agreed_syllabus_for_religious_education.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.salisbury.anglican.org/resources-library/schools1/2012-re/2012-re-dorset-ks1-2/2012%20RE-%20Dorset%20Guidance-%20KS1-2%20New%20Agreed%20Syllabus-%20Community%20VC%20VA%20Schools%20Academies.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/2081/council\\_agreed\\_syllabus](http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/2081/council_agreed_syllabus)

<sup>6</sup> <https://humanism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Islington-Agreed-RE-Syllabus-2012-Edition-final.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.blackhorseprimary.org.uk/downloadfile/2183476?open=true>

<sup>8</sup> [https://humanism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/WideningHorizons\\_Dec-12.pdf](https://humanism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/WideningHorizons_Dec-12.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.mewan.net/curriculum/re/index.php?category\\_id=61](http://www.mewan.net/curriculum/re/index.php?category_id=61)

<sup>10</sup>

[https://www.egfl.org.uk/sites/default/files/imported/categories/teaching/curriculum/subjects/re/re\\_curr/recrurric\\_docs/Sowing\\_the\\_seeds\\_July14.pdf](https://www.egfl.org.uk/sites/default/files/imported/categories/teaching/curriculum/subjects/re/re_curr/recrurric_docs/Sowing_the_seeds_July14.pdf) and

[http://www.egfl.org.uk/export/sites/egfl/categories/teaching/curriculum/subjects/re/re\\_curr/ks3\\_schemes/ks3\\_Humanism.doc](http://www.egfl.org.uk/export/sites/egfl/categories/teaching/curriculum/subjects/re/re_curr/ks3_schemes/ks3_Humanism.doc)

<sup>11</sup> <https://learning.calderdale.gov.uk/cmbc/services/school-management/sacre/Documents/Reports%20and%20Brochures/syllabus%202014.pdf>

Fulham's,<sup>12</sup> Sheffield's,<sup>13</sup> Newcastle's, Oldham's,<sup>14</sup> Cornwall's,<sup>15</sup> and Richmond-upon-Thames'<sup>16</sup>). The REC's vision is that 'Every young person experiences a personally inspiring and academically rigorous education in religious and non-religious worldviews'.<sup>17</sup>

- It is vital that Religious Education remains relevant to young people and with surveys suggesting that between 31% and 69% are not religious,<sup>18</sup> this means including non-religious worldviews. While all young people, whether religious or not, are hugely interested in religions, when non-religious young people feel that their beliefs are being excluded or marginalised, RE struggles to engage with them.
- International agreements all recommend the inclusion of non-religious worldviews alongside religious beliefs and in fact the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief specifically recommended it in her last report on the UK.<sup>19</sup>
- The BHA was a founder member of and has always played an active part in the RE Council including at the Board level and has been involved in the steering groups of all relevant government and quango reviews for the last decade. Almost six out of seven English SACREs include a humanist – more than include many representatives of religions that *are* studied.
- The Independent School Standards require that independent schools, Academies and Free Schools 'actively promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.'<sup>20</sup> Until November 2014, departmental advice recommended that schools meet this standard by

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<sup>12</sup>

[http://www.lbhf.gov.uk/Directory/Education and Learning/Schools and Colleges/School Staff Zone/SACRE RE Syllabus final.pdf](http://www.lbhf.gov.uk/Directory/Education%20and%20Learning/Schools%20and%20Colleges/School%20Staff%20Zone/SACRE%20RE%20Syllabus%20final.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.foxhillprimary.com/1%20A%20Sheffield%20RE%20Syllabus%202014%20Final.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/3124/thinking enquiry creativity response-oldham religious education syllabus 2014 -2019](http://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/3124/thinking%20enquiry%20creativity%20response-oldham%20religious%20education%20syllabus%202014%20-2019)

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/education-and-learning/cornwall-learning/advice-and-support/standing-advisory-council-for-religious-education/sacre-agreed-syllabus/?page=7813>

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.richmond.gov.uk/sacre\\_syllabus\\_2014.pdf](http://www.richmond.gov.uk/sacre_syllabus_2014.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> *Aims, Vision and Values*, Religious Education Council for England and Wales:

<http://religioneeducationcouncil.org.uk/about/how-the-rec-works/aims-vision-and-values>

<sup>18</sup> The 2011 Census found 31% of 0-19 year olds having no religion, with a further 8% not stated. The 2013 *British Social Attitudes Survey* records 69% of 15-24 year olds as not belonging to any religion: see the British Social Attitudes Information System, with cross-tabs by age:

[http://www.britisocat.com/BodyTwoCol\\_rpt.aspx?control=CCESDMarginals&MapID=RELIGION&SeriesID=12](http://www.britisocat.com/BodyTwoCol_rpt.aspx?control=CCESDMarginals&MapID=RELIGION&SeriesID=12)

<sup>19</sup> A/HRC/7/10/Add.3 *Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Asma Jahangir into the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (June 2007)*, United Nations Human Rights Council, (amongst others) paragraph 69, 7 February 2008:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/Visits.aspx>

<sup>20</sup> The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2014/2374/made>

using 'teaching resources from a wide variety of sources to help pupils understand a range of faiths, and beliefs such as atheism and humanism.'<sup>21</sup>

It logically follows that Humanism should also be included in the Religious Studies subject content. While the few sentences that do refer to non-religious beliefs are a start, they go nowhere near far enough: if RE/RS is the logical place on the current curriculum for the study of non-religious worldviews (which it is), then it plainly follows that Humanism should be included at least to the same extent as some of the principal religions. Set against all of these reasons, any implications inferred from the subject being called 'Religious Studies' pale into insignificance.

There is widespread support for inclusion of an annex on Humanism, both within the profession and amongst other relevant academics. A letter we organised calling for it to be possible to systematically study non-religious worldviews at both GCSE and A level, and for the introduction of an annex on Humanism, has been widely signed by over 100 philosophers (including moral philosophers, philosophers of education, philosophers of religion and experts on Humanism), RE professors, consultants, advisors and teachers, and children's authors, including some 26 professors of philosophy; Keith Ward, Regius Professor Emeritus of Divinity at the University of Oxford; Professor Brian Gates, former Chair of the REC (2002-11); Professor Trevor Cooling, Director of National Institute for Christian Education Research; Professor Bob Jackson, former Director of the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit (1994-2012); Dr Jacqueline Watson, former Director of the Centre for Spirituality and Religion in Education (2012-14); Alan Brine, former HMI and National Lead for Religious Education within Ofsted (2007-14); Ed Pawson, Chair of the National Association of Teachers of RE; and Mark Chater, former Senior Adviser for RE, Qualifications & Curriculum Development Agency (2006-10).

This letter is provided as annex 2 to this response. Our conversations with philosophers, teachers, parents and pupils have also generated a range of supportive reactions, which we have also included in that annex. One RE teacher told us:

*'As an RE teacher I constantly come up against the limitations of a curriculum that does not fit the needs of our pupils. Narrow curriculum hinders education. Our pupils need to be challenged. They need to be exposed to a range of alternative views. Without Humanism this is impossible. A lot is made of community cohesion and it is obviously the case the broader an understanding a student has the more open minded they will be. However RE is not just or even primarily about community cohesion (our*

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<sup>21</sup> *Improving the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils* Departmental advice for independent schools, academies and free schools, Department for Education, November 2013: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-the-smsc-development-of-pupils-in-independent-schools> A recent revision to this advice deleted 'and beliefs such as atheism and humanism'; we are currently seeking clarification from the Department as to why this change was made.

*society is diverse in many respects – not just in religion. Thus RE is unjustifiable on these grounds alone). Our students have a right to be given a safe place to critically engage with competing truth claims about fundamental questions and values. They have a right to be equipped with the skills and ability to make their own informed decisions. They cannot possibly do this on a limited curriculum focusing on two religions and no non-religious world view. This lets down our young people and fails to give them a meaningful education that prepares them for life.'*

An adviser to three SACREs told us:

*'For many years now I have felt that an education about religion is incomplete unless pupils and students have the chance to engage with secular world views such as Humanism, world views which provide a necessary counterbalance to the teachings and practices of religious world views. Since at least 2004, government publications have, correctly, encouraged schools/teachers and local authorities to include secular world views in their programmes of study/syllabuses, and such sentiments are very evident in the widely respected REC for England and Wales' "RE Review" of 2013. All the agreed syllabuses that I have helped to write (in four different local authorities), and most such syllabuses that I use when visiting individual schools, encourage teaching and learning about secular world views, most often the world view of Humanism, but, suddenly, just at that point at which young minds are at their most curious and constructively critical, it is being proposed that the study of Humanism will NOT be allowed at GCSE. This not only threatens to turn back the RE clock about 15 years, but also means that RE at Key Stage 4 will not build on whatever work has taken place within the subject earlier in the students' careers.'*

One humanist SACRE representative told us:

*'If RE is to fulfil its claims to be relevant to all and academically challenging, it should include a worldview such as Humanism. Humanist beliefs are common in our diverse society but currently too little studied and analysed.*

*'Humanism has sound philosophical foundations, institutions, and ethical perspectives that are worthy of study in themselves and would be of interest to the religious and non-religious alike: the former because they offer contrasts to their beliefs and practices and critiques to consider and analyse; the latter because they may reflect some of their beliefs and offer them relevant foundations for their values.*

*'I have encountered a great deal of support for the inclusion of Humanism in RE from teachers, student teachers, RE academics and representatives from many religious backgrounds, for the above reasons. Those in education understand perfectly well that to study a religion or belief is not the same as*

*imposing that belief on anyone, and that all beliefs can be analysed, discussed, and criticised – and should be if RE is to have academic credibility.'*

One student told us:

*'I'm in year twelve so have just finished my GCSEs. I enjoyed Religious Education very much in lower school, however I felt the curriculum was very limited in its exploration of non-religious viewpoints. This was the main reason for why I decided not to take Religious Studies at GCSE. I think that RS is a very important subject and is key in helping children understand the world and help them develop into understanding and respectful adults. However as a humanist I think that the GCSE RS course does not include my views and the views of many other atheists and humanists wanting to study religion and we feel excluded by the lack of education about our beliefs. RS needs to be taught to my generation but the current curriculum is just not representative of our beliefs today.'*

In other words, excluding Humanism from RS GCSE leads to fewer young people studying religion, as well as non-religious worldviews.

Furthermore, the RE Council for England and Wales's position is that '*The REC Board has agreed unanimously that the optional systematic study of a non-religious worldview should be introduced at GCSE level. We want to promote a rigorous and inclusive study of religions and beliefs that is relevant and challenging for young people of all faiths and none.*'<sup>22</sup> It sees '*fail[ure] to include the option for systematic study of a non-religious worldview in parallel with study of a religion... as unacceptable in relation to the RE Review, the REC's vision and on general educational grounds*'. We endorse its response to this consultation.

The National Association of Teachers of Religious Education's Executive's position is similarly that there should be the addition of an annex on non-religious world views, and its Chair has signed the open letter to Nick Gibb calling for the systematic study of non-religious worldviews at both GCSE and A level and an annex on Humanism to be added at GCSE level.

This question asks us to consider a number of issues in forming our response. Our views on these are:

- there is a suitable level of challenge: we would say that there is not, as it is hard to see how a qualification can be said to be sufficiently robust and rigorous when it goes against the overwhelming consensus of subject

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<sup>22</sup> 'Religious Education Council statement on exam reform consultation', Religious Education Council for England and Wales, 7 November 2014: <http://religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/educators/news/2014-11-07/religious-education-council-statement-on-exam-reform-consultation>

professionals in marginalising a large section of the field of study to which it belongs.

- the content reflects what students need to know in order to progress to further academic and vocational education: we would say that it does not, as higher education courses are themselves increasingly inclusive of non-religious worldviews, through for example the Nonreligion and Secularity Research Network; while locally agreed syllabuses and schools are increasingly inclusive of non-religious worldviews, a trend that is if anything only accelerating since the publication of the 2013 framework – and therefore students who are future teachers are not being prepared for the range of beliefs that they themselves would have to teach.
- the amount of content in the qualification is appropriate and comparable to other reformed GCSEs and, if not, whether you have any suggestions for removing or adding content: for all the reasons we have given, the amount of content is not appropriate. Non-religious worldviews should be included throughout and an annex on Humanism should be added.
- there is the right balance between breadth and depth of study: we would say that there is insufficient breadth and depth – insufficient breadth in essentially omitting the second biggest belief group, and insufficient depth in that to the extent that that group is included, it is to a much shallower extent than the principal religions.

For reasons of relevance to young people, coherence (both with the 2013 framework and internally), robustness and academic rigour, and tolerance of those of all faiths and none, it is vital that there is added an annex on Humanism.

### **The place of non-religious worldviews and Humanism in Part One**

We firmly believe that it should be possible for students, should they wish to do so, to systematically study a non-religious worldview alongside a religion; and that there should be an annex on Humanism placed alongside the seven annexes on the principal religions. We think that this is vital for all the reasons set out above.

#### What we want to see change, in practice

For the full course, we would want the programme of study amended to specify the study of *'two religions or one religion and one non-religious worldview'*, either *'shared equally between the two religions or one religion and one non-religious worldview'*, or giving more time to *'a primary religion or non-religious worldview'* and less time to a *'second religion or first non-religious worldview'*.

For the short course, we would similarly want specifications to offer the opportunity to either *'two religions or one religion and one non-religious worldview'*.

We do not see the need to allow for the study of two non-religious worldviews as in practice there is only one non-religious worldview that is significantly common to

merit an annex in its own right, namely Humanism. We shall return to this point later on.

Similarly, we would want to see the four (study of religion) topics in the subject content amended to be more inclusive in their language. In annex 3 we have specified what this text might look like.

Finally, we are submitting as annex 4 to this consultation response an 'annex on Humanism' that we would want to see sit alongside the seven annexes on the principal religions.

#### Consultation on annex on Humanism

The annex on Humanism that we are submitting was produced in partnership with teachers and academics in September 2014. Following the publication of this consultation and the draft GCSE subject content, we revised the annex to fit and ran our own two-week consultation on what the annex should look like at <https://humanism.org.uk/reconsult/>. We consulted with all the RE teachers, advisors, consultants, philosophers and other RE professionals who signed the letter that forms annex 2 to this consultation response; hundreds of other RE professionals who the BHA has worked with over the years; the 150 humanists who sit on SACREs; and through NATRE's membership, the <http://thereconsult.blogspot.co.uk/> blog and the Save RE Facebook group. We also sought the corporate views of the RE Council's Board.

We asked respondents whether or not they supported including an annex on Humanism, and what they thought of our specific proposals. All bar one respondent (who was unsure) supported inclusion, and many helpful comments were received.

This process resulted in a new 'Sources of wisdom and authority' section, chronicling 'key figures and stages in the evolving humanist tradition' from the ancient world to the modern global community. At the request of Nick Gibb MP and officials, we also have provided some 3,500 words of authoritative sources and quotations throughout. This is not in keeping with the religious annexes, which have no such references, and as a consequence it is hard for us to determine the right balance between these sources being prescriptive and being suggestive/illustrative. But it shows that such references can be provided, and therefore it is possible to ensure that all specifications based on the Humanism annex will meet the required level of rigour. It is up to officials as to whether it would be best to include these references, and if so, how.

#### What we mean by 'worldview'

When we use the term 'worldview', we mean a moral and ethical framework that seeks to answer the major questions of meaning and purpose. A religious worldview is a worldview that involves faith or belief in the supernatural. A non-

religious worldview is a worldview that rejects faith and belief in the supernatural.

In our response to the ongoing consultation on humanist marriages, following on from the requirement in the Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Act 2013 for the Government to consult on the introduction of belief-based marriages, we wrote the following:

*The Act specifies that any qualifying organisation [to perform belief-based marriages] must advance a 'system of non-religious beliefs which relate to morality or ethics'.*

(i) a 'system'

*The formula in the Act might on a wide reading admit mere codes of conduct unrelated to any existential belief. However, the requirement for a 'system' of beliefs presumably requires more than merely the holding of an assortment of beliefs: they must be integrated. There is an echo here of the case law under the Human Rights Act of beliefs needing to 'attain a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance'<sup>23</sup>.*

*In a related legal context, we have previously<sup>24</sup> drawn attention to the fact that both religious and non-religious 'lifestances' (roughly equivalent to 'systems of belief') invariably have two elements:*

- *They entail convictions about the nature of the world we live in and of human life.*
- *They draw implications for the way we live – typically establishing a basis of morality and values.*

*These interdependent elements constitute a system.*

(ii) 'non-religious'

*A 'belief' in law may be 'non-religious' in one of two ways:*

- *specifically non-religious (i.e. incompatible with religion e.g. Humanism) or*

<sup>23</sup> 'In its ordinary meaning the word 'convictions', taken on its own, is not synonymous with the words 'opinions' and 'ideas', such as are utilised in Article 10 (art. 10) of the Convention, which guarantees freedom of expression; it is more akin to the term 'beliefs' (in the French text: 'convictions') appearing in Article 9 (art. 9) – which guarantees freedom of thought, conscience and religion – and denotes views that attain a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance.' . . . [philosophical convictions] 'denotes, in the Court's opinion, such convictions as are worthy of respect in a 'democratic society' and are not incompatible with human dignity.' – Campbell and Cosans v. UK: (1982), 4 EHRR 293 p304, para 36 and p305, para 36)

<sup>24</sup> Religion and Non-religious Beliefs in Charity Law, August 2007: available at <http://david-pollock.org.uk/religion/religion-and-non-religious-beliefs-in-charity-law/>

- *non-religious only in the neutral sense that it has no relation to religion.*

*An example of the latter would be strongly held and coherent beliefs on 'green' issues (but see below). Another might be a system of beliefs arising from the philosophy of (say) Ayn Rand.*

Following on from what we wrote in response to that consultation, we think the term 'worldview', as we have defined it, does not encapsulate everything that could be classified as a 'belief' in equality and human rights law, but means only moral and ethical frameworks that are specifically religious or specifically non-religious. Furthermore, only the six principal religious worldviews and Humanism merit annexes. We now turn to the question of why that is.

#### Why an annex on Humanism specifically?

There are two reasons why it is logical and coherent that Humanism is the exemplar of a non-religious worldview that is included with an annex alongside the main world religions.

The first is that it is the only such worldview that is clearly articulated and the subject of a sufficient body of writing suitable for use in schools.

The second is that it is the (explicit or implicit) worldview of the great majority of non-religious people in England.<sup>25</sup> Not every person who meets the definition of a humanist would refer to themselves as such and some will even be unfamiliar with the term. This reflects the fact that non-religious people are not compelled by their beliefs to engage in any sort of formal practice or observance, join any organisation or even identify with any particular creed at all. This difference between religions and non-religious worldviews should not mask the fact that the humanist outlook on life is widespread in Britain today, much more so than all the minority religions combined.

It is hard to see what other non-religious worldviews would merit an annex, given the fact that amongst the religions, only the six principal religions currently have an annex.

Atheism and agnosticism are not worldviews but positions merely on the existence of god. They are not equivalent to religions but to theism. Advocating for atheism to have an annex is equivalent to advocating for theism to have an annex. Besides, humanists are by definition atheists or agnostics and so both terms would be discussed as part of the systematic study of Humanism.

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<sup>25</sup> See, for example, this 2006 Ipsos MORI survey that found that 36% of the population meets the definition of being a humanist, with the figures being even higher amongst the young: <https://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/190/Humanist-Beliefs.aspx>

Secularism is not a worldview but a political position, equivalent to (for example) feminism.

Non-theistic religions such as some versions of Buddhism are religions and at any rate Buddhism is already included.

New religious movements (popularly known as cults) should not have annexes not because they are not religions but due to their lack of widespread support. (Similarly, religions such as Jainism, the Bahá'í Faith, Zoroastrianism, paganism and Rastafarianism do not have annexes.) Extending the subject content to cover non-religious worldviews and adding an annex on Humanism does not make it any more likely that such beliefs will be studied.

'Beliefs' such as nihilism, Confucianism and (the philosophical aspects of) Marxism are worldviews but (like many reputable but minor religions) not widespread enough to merit annexes, given the current threshold that has been adopted.

Philosophical convictions on a narrow range of issues, such as vegetarianism, are 'beliefs' but not worldviews. They might meet the definition of a 'belief' under equality and human rights legislation but they would not merit an annex as they are not moral and ethical frameworks that seek to answer the major questions of meaning and purpose.

An argument could be made in terms of numbers for inclusion of the beliefs of individuals who are 'spiritual but not religious', who believe in some higher power or life force but in a non-defined way, or perhaps who believe in life after death – all of which are common beliefs. But (unlike Humanism) such beliefs are rarely or never articulated in a way susceptible of study except by sociologists of belief, and anyway exactly the same arguments could be made in favour of including the equally widespread – and sometimes indistinguishable – beliefs of vaguely religious individuals who are not particularly aligned to any one of the six principal religions, or who are aligned but whose beliefs fall well away from those of the established hierarchy, or who culturally practice a particular religion but do not believe any of the theological claims.

We are not making a commentary on the legitimacy of studying any of the different religions, worldviews or other approaches we have referred to – young people are often very interested in smaller religions, alternative worldviews and cults, all of which can be prominent in media discourse, and good RE should engage with any questions they have about these different belief systems. However, what we *are* doing is merely outlining the fact that while it is unjustifiable that non-religious worldviews and Humanism are excluded, it would be logically coherent to allow the systematic study of a non-religious worldview and then specify, in an annex, additional content for the only commonplace and clearly articulated non-religious worldview, namely Humanism.

We return to more passive questions of preferred terminology (i.e. 'beliefs' vs 'non-religious worldviews') later on.

### **The place of non-religious worldviews and Humanism in Part Two**

There seems to be some confusion between the requirement, on the one hand, for study in part two to be systematically focussed on one or two religions, and the requirement, on the other hand, to take a more thematic approach, particularly with respect to 'religious, philosophical and ethical studies in the modern world'. Non-religious worldviews seem to us to be particularly vulnerable to exclusion as a result of this, due to the fact that the proposed content does not allow them to be systematically studied.

More generally, once again we firmly believe that such systematic study of a non-religious worldview should be possible, alongside the study of a religion. We think this for reasons we have already set out.

#### What we want to see change, in practice

In practice, for the full course, we would only want the programme of study amended to require the study of '*either one or two religions or one religion and one non-religious worldview.*' Again, we would not see the need for students to only be able to study one non-religious worldview. We strongly support young people learning about a broad range of religions and non-religious worldviews and would not want it to be possible for non-religious worldviews to be the only area of study.

The 'textual studies' area, as currently drafted, is somewhat challenging for non-religious worldviews, as many such worldviews, such as Humanism, do not have 'primary texts'. However, we believe something requiring students to study '*primary religious texts from one or both of the religions they have studied for Part One: Study of Religions, or both primary religious texts from the one religion and highly influential publications from the non-religious worldview they have studied for Part One: Study of Religions*' would be sufficiently clear. We would want to see further amendments to the text, in particular the themes, to include non-religious worldviews throughout. Again, in annex 3 we have specified what this text might look like.

For the 'religious, philosophical and ethical studies in the modern world' section, again we would want amendments to make the subject content inclusive of non-religious worldviews throughout. Again, in annex 3 we have specified what this text might look like.

### **The terminology used and lack of inclusivity of the language more generally**

#### Lack of inclusivity in general

We are disappointed by the general lack of inclusive language in the subject content, other than one or two notable exceptions. Prior to publication of the consultation document, we were repeatedly assured that the subject content, particularly outside of part one, would use inclusive language, but it does not seem to us that it actually deserves this commendation.

Some of the places where the language is inclusive are logically inconsistent, for example paragraph 12 says that 'all specifications must require students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding that religious traditions in Great Britain are diverse and include the following religions: Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism, as well as other religions and non-religious beliefs'. But how can specifications require students to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of that degree of diversity when the programme of study limits specifications to the study of two religions specifically, and the topics do not allow space for putting those two religions within their broader context?

The aim expressed at the start that specifications should 'develop students' knowledge and understanding of religions and non-religious beliefs' seems to be somewhat tokenistic – it is difficult to know how specifications will do this, as when the subject content gets more specific, it tends to become more restrictive, particularly in relation to 'religious studies' and 'textual studies', which make up between 50% and 100% of the total.

Some other places have also got less inclusive since the last draft we saw as part of the reference group.

In total we can see eight references to non-religious beliefs/worldviews across the 22 pages of subject content.<sup>26</sup> By comparison, the 26-page long *Curriculum Framework for Religious Education in England* contains some 120 references to non-religious beliefs/worldviews.<sup>27</sup> (By comparison, 'religion/s/us' appears some 224 times, 'religious' 81 times and 'Christian/s/ity' some 30 times).

Most worryingly, the term 'worldview', which appears 100 times in the framework, does not appear in the GCSE subject content at all, nor does 'Humanism'. And there is no definition of the term 'belief' or of 'non-religious beliefs'.

#### The language of 'non-religious worldviews' vs 'beliefs' etc.

Where the subject content does refer to non-religious beliefs or worldviews, it is invariably through use of the phrase 'non-religious beliefs' or by referring to

<sup>26</sup> Four to 'non-religious beliefs', one to 'religion or belief', five to 'religion/s and belief/s' (but two clearly mean 'religious beliefs').

<sup>27</sup> 'Worldview/s' appears 100 times, 'non-religious' a further six times, 'humanist/s' six times, 'Humanism' four times, 'religion/s and belief/s' three times and 'religions, beliefs' once.

'religion/s and/or belief/s'. But the terms 'beliefs', 'non-religious beliefs' or 'secular philosophies'<sup>28</sup> are **ambiguous and easily misunderstood**. For this reason, the term 'non-religious worldviews' or the phrase 'religions and worldviews' is better, along with a definition of what is meant (as we have provided above), **and for these reasons this is what the 2013 framework does.**

As long ago as in its 1989 Handbook for SACREs, ASCs and Schools, the REC stated that one generally accepted aim of RE would be, 'To encourage knowledge and understanding of religions and similar world views.' Even then this usage was no novelty and there has been a general acceptance among RE teachers and specialists for over fifty years that an RE that does not pay some attention to non-religious worldviews is incomplete. The 2013 framework has a footnote explaining that 'The phrase 'religions and worldviews' is used to refer to Christianity, other principal religions represented in Britain, smaller religious communities and non-religious worldviews such as Humanism. The phrase is meant to be inclusive.' This very clearly delimits what is meant by the phrase.

In fact, the phrase was used by the then Secretary of State in his foreword to the 2013 framework: 'All children need to acquire core knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and practices of the religions and worldviews which not only shape their history and culture but which guide their own development... This RE curriculum framework... has the endorsement of a very wide range of professional organisations and bodies representing faiths and other worldviews. I hope the document will be useful to all those seeking to provide RE of the highest quality for young people in our schools.'

Not only are the terminology and omission of any definition concerning for lack of clarity: they also lead to inconsistency with 2013 framework, which in itself should be something the DfE is seeking to achieve.

This is, perhaps, less of an issue for this subject content than it was for the framework, as the subject content is less likely to be used by teachers in a direct sense. However, it still strikes us that it would be helpful for awarding organisations to be given clear and consistent subject content.

If a clear definition of 'non-religious worldviews' and the phrase 'religions and worldviews' is provided at the start, perhaps in a footnote, then it would be sufficient to just refer to 'worldviews' throughout the rest of the document. This is the approach taken by the 2013 framework, which we welcomed at the time.<sup>29</sup>

### **The 'two religions' requirement in Part One**

<sup>28</sup> Which has not been used but has appeared in other documents in the past.

<sup>29</sup> 'New RE subject framework makes clear: schools should put non-religious beliefs on equal footing', British Humanist Association, 23 October 2014: <https://humanism.org.uk/2013/10/23/new-re-subject-framework-makes-clear-schools-put-non-religious-beliefs-equal-footing/>

With all of that said, we do welcome the fact that students will have to study two religions in part one, and will not be able to focus solely on one religion, as has been possible hitherto. We believe it is vital that all young people learn about the full range of religious and non-religious worldviews that are commonplace in British society. Learning about different religions and worldviews makes a significant contribution to respect and tolerance of individuals with different beliefs, building mutual understanding, and hence improving community cohesion.

As a result, the proposed change to require schools to teach two religions does not, in our opinion, go as far as we would like – we would want students to have to focus on more than two religions and worldviews (the current subject content allows for three) and for thematic study to be an option for some or all of the qualification. We would also want to see more coherence with the curriculum that students study at key stages one to three, in order to ensure that every student studies, at a minimum, all of the six principal religions and Humanism over the course of their time in school.

But, with that said, the requirement to study two religions is nonetheless very welcome progress towards that ideal goal.

2 Is the revised A level content in religious studies appropriate? Please consider:

- whether the content reflects what students need to know in order to progress to undergraduate study.

Please provide evidence to support your response.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure
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Comments:

We have set out at length in our response to question one why we want GCSE students to have the option to systematically study a non-religious worldview (i.e. Humanism) as well as religions. For all the same reasons, we want students to be able to systematically study Humanism at AS and A level. However, we would not want students to be able to study a non-religious worldview for their entire qualification, as we want every student to study a diversity of perspectives, so would be happy to see a statement added saying that students may only study a non-religious worldview in either their 'systematic study' or their 'textual studies'.

We would wish to see further changes to the text in order to ensure that inclusive phraseology is used throughout and in order to make the language around 'beliefs' vs 'worldviews' easier to understand. In annex 3 we have suggested amendments to the text, and in our response to question one we have explained the reason why we want to see these changes made.

We will also be responding to Ofqual's consultation, calling for similar changes to ensure the assessment objectives are inclusive in their language.

#### What we want to see change, in more detail

We would want to see the aims and objectives changed to add references to non-religious worldviews alongside references to religion/s.

With respect to 'Systematic Study of one Religion', we would want it to be possible to systematically study one non-religious worldview, and have appropriate re-wording throughout.

With respect to 'Textual Studies', again we would want students to be able to study a non-religious worldview. However, we would not want students to be able to study a non-religious worldview for both their 'Systematic Study' and 'Textual Studies', as we want students to be exposed to a diversity of perspectives. Therefore we would be happy to see a statement added saying that students may only study a non-religious worldview if they have not done so in their 'systematic study of one religion or non-religious worldview' (and by implication, vice versa).

In annex 3 we have suggested amendments to the text with respect to 'Systematic Study of one Religion', 'Philosophical, Ethical and Social Scientific Studies of Religion' and 'Textual Studies' to make it inclusive.

Finally, we would like to see the part that refers to '*the challenges of secularism, science, responses to pluralism and diversity within traditions, migration, the changing roles of men and women, feminist and liberationist approaches*' refer to '*the influences...*' instead of '*the challenges...*'. While the social and historical developments listed have often been seen by religions to be challenges, at other times religions have embraced or been indifferent to the changes that they have caused. It is wrong for the specifications to prejudge the nature of the interaction.

3 Is the revised AS qualification content in religious studies appropriate?

Please provide evidence to support your response.

<input type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
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Comments: Please see our response to question 2, above.

4 Do you think that any of the proposals have the potential to have a disproportionate impact, positive or negative, on specific students, in particular those with 'relevant protected characteristics'? (The relevant protected characteristics are disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.)

Please provide evidence to support your response.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
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Comments: (We are not sure whether we should tick 'Agree' or 'Disagree' if we believe that the proposals might have a disproportionate negative impact on some students but believe that they will.)

We believe that the proposals will have a disproportionate negative impact on students of no religion. As we set out in our response to question one, it is hard to see how RE and RS can remain relevant to young people today, particularly to those with no religion, if non-religious beliefs cannot be systematically studied.

5 How could any adverse impact be reduced and how could the subject content of GCSEs and/or A levels be altered to better advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it?

Please provide evidence to support your response.

Comments: Any adverse impact can be remedied by making the changes we have requested in our response to questions one, two and three, above. Changes to the assessment objectives will also be required and we will be saying this in our response to Ofqual's consultation.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

<b>Please acknowledge this reply.</b>	
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E-mail address for acknowledgement:
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Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, please confirm below if you would be willing to be contacted again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
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All DfE public consultations are required to meet the Cabinet Office [Principles on Consultation](#)

The key Consultation Principles are:

- departments will follow a range of timescales rather than defaulting to a 12-week period, particularly where extensive engagement has occurred before
- departments will need to give more thought to how they engage with and use real discussion with affected parties and experts as well as the expertise of civil service learning to make well informed decisions
- departments should explain what responses they have received and how these have been used in formulating policy
- consultation should be 'digital by default', but other forms should be used where these are needed to reach the groups affected by a policy
- the principles of the Compact between government and the voluntary and community sector will continue to be respected.

If you have any comments on how DfE consultations are conducted, please contact Aileen Shaw, DfE Consultation Coordinator, tel: 0370 000 2288 / email: [aileen.shaw@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:aileen.shaw@education.gsi.gov.uk)

**Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.**

Completed responses should be sent to the address shown below by 29 December 2014

Send by post to: Alex Smith, Floor 2, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith St, Westminster, London SW1P 3BT, UK.

Send by e-mail to:

[RSGCSEandAlevelSeptember.CONSULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:RSGCSEandAlevelSeptember.CONSULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk)

**Reformed GCSE and A level subject content consultation for religious studies  
GCSE and A level: Annexes to the response from the British Humanist  
Association**

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## Annex 1: Why Humanism is included in ‘Religious Education’ (‘RE’)

Humanism has been studied in RE for about fifty years. In its report *RE, Attainment and National Curriculum* (1991), the Religious Education Council set out the standard case for inclusion:

- *RE should be open to all pupils regardless of their beliefs.*
- *If RE is ‘open’ it is necessary for pupils to learn that there are many who do not believe or practise a theistic or religious world-view. Indeed if pupils did not learn this, it could be said they were victims of indoctrination.*
- *Humanism and other non-theistic beliefs have their own views about religion and these ought to be part of a pupil's RE.*
- *Humanist thinking has influenced the RE and PSE curriculum, particularly in the exploration of the term 'spiritual'.*
- *Many pupils come from non-religious backgrounds and probably share some of the views humanists express.*
- *The RE Council has benefited since its foundation from the active membership of the BHA in its ranks.*

Today, the RE Council’s vision is that ‘Every young person experiences a personally inspiring and academically rigorous education in religious and non-religious worldviews.’<sup>1</sup>

A 2013 survey found that more people consider RE to have been the ‘least beneficial subject’ than any other.<sup>2</sup> **It is vital that RE stays relevant to our population if it is to maintain its place within the curriculum.** Pupils in all types of school should have the opportunity to consider philosophical and fundamental questions, and in an open society we should learn about each other’s beliefs. There should be a subject on the curriculum which helps young people to form and explore their own beliefs and develop an understanding of the beliefs and values different from their own; enriches pupils’ knowledge of the religious and humanist heritage of humanity and so supports other subjects such as History, English Literature, Art, Music, and Geography; and allows pupils to engage with serious ethical and philosophical questions in a way that develops important skills of critical thinking, reasoning and inquiry.

All the usual **contemporary justifications for the subject of Religious Education in the school curriculum** – its contribution to social cohesion and mutual understanding, its presentation of a range of answers to questions of meaning and purpose, its role in educating about the history and present culture of humanity, and its role in the search for personal identity and values – can only be served by including humanist perspectives and non-religious students.

Surveys consistently show that a **high proportion of young people are not religious**; for example, the 2011 Census found 31% of 0-19 year olds having no religion, with a further 8% not stated; the 2003 *Citizenship Survey* found 46% of 11-15 year olds not having a religion (44% were Christian);<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Aims, Vision and Values*, Religious Education Council for England and Wales:

<http://religionseducationcouncil.org.uk/about/how-the-rec-works/aims-vision-and-values>

<sup>2</sup> <http://news.opinium.co.uk/sites/news.opinium.co.uk/files/OP3507%20-%20Opinium%20PR%20-%20Education%20-%20SET%20FOUR%20-%20Tables.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Christine Farmer, ‘2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey: Top-level findings from the Children’s and Young People’s Survey’ (Home Office and Department for Education and Skills, 2005), p. 37:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120919132719/http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/452490.pdf>

while a 2004 Department for Education report found 65% of 12-19 year olds are not religious;<sup>4</sup> and the 2013 *British Social Attitudes Survey* records 69% of 15-24 year olds as not belonging to any religion.<sup>5</sup> For RE to remain relevant as a subject, it is vital that it is as relevant to these young people as it is to their religious peers. While all young people, whether religious or not, are hugely interested in religions, when young people feel that their beliefs are being excluded or marginalised, this leads to them feeling marginalised as well and so causes them to lose interest and disengage.

Finally, the inclusion of non-religious worldviews in the curriculum alongside religious beliefs reflects consistent recommendations in **international agreements** such as the ODIHR-OSCE's *Toledo Guiding Principles on teaching about religions and beliefs in public schools* (2007),<sup>6</sup> the *Final Document of the International Consultative Conference on School Education in Relation to Freedom of Religion or Belief, Tolerance and Non-Discrimination* (2001),<sup>7</sup> and the Council of Europe's *Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education* (2008).<sup>8</sup> Such inclusion was specifically recommended in the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief's last report on the UK.<sup>9</sup> The relevant sections of these documents are quoted in annex 5.

### **Humanists' work in RE**

The BHA is a founding member of the RE Council for England and Wales (REC), and for many years there has been a humanist on the Board of the REC. The BHA is also strongly supportive of the role schools play in furthering pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The BHA helped to develop Ofsted's 2004 guidance on this matter, and endorses the definition of spiritual development that they use. The BHA has been part of most government and quango initiatives on RE in the last couple of decades.

Many SACREs have had humanist representatives for many decades, including as Chairs and Vice-Chairs of both SACREs and ASCs. Recent years have seen a large rise in the number of humanists who are on SACREs: almost six out of seven English SACREs now have a humanist or are in the process of admitting one. The contribution of humanists to RE is enormous.

### **Successive government views on Humanism in RE**

In 1994 the then (Conservative) Secretary of State for Education wrote to the BHA: 'Let me assure you that we fully appreciate the role which the BHA in particular has played in the development of RE in this country,' and '...it is perfectly possible for RE to include teaching about non-theistic ways of life, such as humanism, and the moral values associated with them.' This inclusion of Humanism can be seen in all more recent national Government publications on RE. For example:

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<sup>4</sup> Alison Park, Miranda Phillips and Mark Johnson, 'Young People in Britain: The Attitudes and Experiences of 12 to 19 Year Olds' (Department for Education and Skills, 2004), pp. 10-11:

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/RR564.pdf.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> From the British Social Attitudes Information System, with cross-tabs by age:

[http://www.britsocat.com/BodyTwoCol\\_rpt.aspx?control=CCESDMarginals&MapID=RELIGION&SeriesID=12](http://www.britsocat.com/BodyTwoCol_rpt.aspx?control=CCESDMarginals&MapID=RELIGION&SeriesID=12)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.osce.org/odihr/29154>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.hurights.or.jp/archives/human\\_rights\\_education\\_in\\_asian\\_schools/section2/2002/03/final-document-of-the-international-consultative-conference-on-school-education-in-relation-to-freed.html](http://www.hurights.or.jp/archives/human_rights_education_in_asian_schools/section2/2002/03/final-document-of-the-international-consultative-conference-on-school-education-in-relation-to-freed.html)

<sup>8</sup> <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1386911&Site=CM>

<sup>9</sup> A/HRC/7/10/Add.3 *Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Asma Jahangir into the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (June 2007)*, United Nations Human Rights Council, (amongst others) paragraph 69, 7 February 2008:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/Visits.aspx>

- The 2004 National Framework says ‘To ensure that all pupils’ voices are heard and the religious education curriculum is broad and balanced, it is recommended that there are opportunities for all pupils to study... secular philosophies such as humanism.’ And during key stages 1-3, it is recommended that pupils study ‘a secular world view, where appropriate’.<sup>10</sup>
- The 2007 key stage 3 programme of study makes the same recommendation, defining a secular world view as ‘secular philosophies such as Humanism.’<sup>11</sup> The key stage 4 programme of study says that pupils should have ‘opportunities to study a range of philosophical and ethical issues that are of relevance to young people’s experience or aspirations and that make reference to some religious and philosophical traditions.’ ‘Religious and philosophical traditions’ is defined as including ‘Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, the Baha’i faith, Jainism, Zoroastrianism and secular philosophies such as Humanism.’<sup>12</sup>
- The (abandoned) 2010 primary programme of learning states ‘To ensure that all children’s voices are heard, it is recommended that there are opportunities to study other religious traditions such as the Baha’i faith, Jainism, and Zoroastrianism, and secular world views, such as humanism’, adding, ‘Over the primary phase as a whole, children should draw on both religious and non-religious world views.’<sup>13</sup>
- The 2010 non-statutory guidance includes several references to Humanism.<sup>14</sup> In addition, in all these documents, RE is defined as important because ‘It develops children’s knowledge and understanding of religions and beliefs, including Christianity, other principal religions, other religious traditions and other world views’ (or something equivalent). The 2010 primary programme of learning adds that ‘The phrase ‘religions and beliefs’ should be taken to include religious and secular world views, and their associated practices.’
- The 2013 religious education curriculum framework, produced by the Religious Education Council for England and Wales and endorsed by the Government, contains 100 references to teaching about non-religious worldviews – putting Humanism on an equal footing with teaching about religions.<sup>15</sup> The document says that ‘The phrase ‘religions and worldviews’ is used in this document to refer to Christianity, other principal religions represented in Britain, smaller religious communities and non-religious worldviews such as Humanism. The phrase is meant to be inclusive’. It also says ‘The curriculum for RE aims to ensure that all pupils: A. Know about and understand a range of religions and worldviews; B. Express ideas and insights about the nature, significance and impact of religions and worldviews; C. Gain and deploy the skills needed to engage seriously with religions and worldviews’.<sup>16</sup>
- The Independent School Standards require that independent schools, Academies and Free Schools ‘actively promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law,

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<sup>10</sup>

[http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20090903160937/http://qca.org.uk/libraryAssets/media/9817\\_re\\_national\\_framework\\_04.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20090903160937/http://qca.org.uk/libraryAssets/media/9817_re_national_framework_04.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> [http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110813032310/http://curriculum.qcda.gov.uk/uploads/QCA-07-3350-p\\_RE\\_KS3\\_tcm8-411.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110813032310/http://curriculum.qcda.gov.uk/uploads/QCA-07-3350-p_RE_KS3_tcm8-411.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> [http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110813032310/http://curriculum.qcda.gov.uk/uploads/QCA-07-3351-p\\_RE\\_KS4\\_tcm8-412.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110813032310/http://curriculum.qcda.gov.uk/uploads/QCA-07-3351-p_RE_KS4_tcm8-412.pdf)

<sup>13</sup>

[http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100202100434/http://qcda.gov.uk/libraryAssets/media/095654\\_QCA\\_PCR\\_Rel\\_Educ\\_SS5.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100202100434/http://qcda.gov.uk/libraryAssets/media/095654_QCA_PCR_Rel_Educ_SS5.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> <http://education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/subjects/a0064886/religious-education-in-english-schools-non-statutory-guidance-2010>

<sup>15</sup> ‘New RE subject framework makes clear: schools should put non-religious beliefs on equal footing’, British Humanist Association, 23 October 2014: <https://humanism.org.uk/2013/10/23/new-re-subject-framework-makes-clear-schools-put-non-religious-beliefs-equal-footing/>

<sup>16</sup> *A Curriculum Framework for Religious Education in England*, The Religious Education Council of England and Wales, 23 October 2014: <http://resubjectreview.recouncil.org.uk/re-review-report>

individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.<sup>17</sup> Until November 2014, departmental advice recommended that schools meet this standard by using ‘teaching resources from a wide variety of sources to help pupils understand a range of faiths, and beliefs such as atheism and humanism.’<sup>18</sup>

The last major survey of the extent to which Humanism is included in locally agreed syllabuses was carried out in 2007. This found that 62 of 80 syllabuses include Humanism.<sup>19</sup> The level of inclusion of Humanism in syllabuses today is higher. Examples of locally agreed syllabuses that before the 2013 RE Subject Framework included Humanism to the same extent as the principal religions include Westminster’s,<sup>20</sup> Brent’s,<sup>21</sup> Dorset’s,<sup>22</sup> Wandsworth’s,<sup>23</sup> Camden’s, Islington’s,<sup>24</sup> South Gloucestershire’s,<sup>25</sup> Hounslow’s,<sup>26</sup> the joint Manchester, Salford, Stockport, Tameside and Trafford syllabus.<sup>27</sup> Syllabuses that have been revised since then include Ealing’s,<sup>28</sup> Calderdale and Kirklees’,<sup>29</sup> Hammersmith and Fulham’s,<sup>30</sup> Sheffield’s,<sup>31</sup> Newcastle’s, Oldham’s,<sup>32</sup> Cornwall’s,<sup>33</sup> and Richmond-upon-Thames’<sup>34</sup>. The latest framework therefore represents no revolution, only an extension of a decades-long trend.

### Postscript on ‘worldviews’

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<sup>17</sup> The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2014/2374/made>

<sup>18</sup> *Improving the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils Departmental advice for independent schools, academies and free schools*, Department for Education, November 2013:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-the-sm-sc-development-of-pupils-in-independent-schools> A recent revision to this advice deleted ‘and beliefs such as atheism and humanism’; we are currently seeking clarification from the Department as to why this change was made.

<sup>19</sup> Dr Jacqueline Watson, ‘Humanism in Agreed Syllabuses for Religious Education: A Report to the British Humanist Association’, University of East Anglia, 2007: <http://humanism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Watson-Syllabus-Report.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> [http://webfronter.com/westminster/RE/mnu4/images/WASVersion\\_Friday-Dec-18-2009.pdf](http://webfronter.com/westminster/RE/mnu4/images/WASVersion_Friday-Dec-18-2009.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> [http://brent.gov.uk/media/946060/agreed\\_syllabus\\_for\\_religious\\_education.pdf](http://brent.gov.uk/media/946060/agreed_syllabus_for_religious_education.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.salisbury.anglican.org/resources-library/schools1/2012-re/2012-re-dorset-ks1-2/2012%20RE-%20Dorset%20Guidance-%20KS1-2%20New%20Agreed%20Syllabus-%20Community%20VC%20VA%20Schools%20Academies.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/2081/council\\_agreed\\_syllabus](http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/2081/council_agreed_syllabus)

<sup>24</sup> <https://humanism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Islington-Agreed-RE-Syllabus-2012-Edition-final.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.blackhorseprimary.org.uk/downloadfile/2183476?open=true>

<sup>26</sup> [https://humanism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/WideningHorizons\\_Dec-12.pdf](https://humanism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/WideningHorizons_Dec-12.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> [http://www.mewan.net/curriculum/re/index.php?category\\_id=61](http://www.mewan.net/curriculum/re/index.php?category_id=61)

<sup>28</sup>

[https://www.egfl.org.uk/sites/default/files/imported/categories/teaching/curriculum/subjects/re/re\\_curric/re\\_curric\\_docs/Sowing\\_the\\_seeds\\_July14.pdf](https://www.egfl.org.uk/sites/default/files/imported/categories/teaching/curriculum/subjects/re/re_curric/re_curric_docs/Sowing_the_seeds_July14.pdf) and

[http://www.egfl.org.uk/export/sites/egfl/categories/teaching/curriculum/subjects/re/re\\_curric/ks3\\_schemes/ks3\\_Humanism.doc](http://www.egfl.org.uk/export/sites/egfl/categories/teaching/curriculum/subjects/re/re_curric/ks3_schemes/ks3_Humanism.doc)

<sup>29</sup> <https://learning.calderdale.gov.uk/cmbc/services/school-management/sacre/Documents/Reports%20and%20Brochures/syllabus%202014.pdf>

<sup>30</sup>

[http://www.lbhf.gov.uk/Directory/Education\\_and\\_Learning/Schools\\_and\\_Colleges/School\\_Staff\\_Zone/SACRE\\_RE\\_Syllabus\\_final.pdf](http://www.lbhf.gov.uk/Directory/Education_and_Learning/Schools_and_Colleges/School_Staff_Zone/SACRE_RE_Syllabus_final.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.foxhillprimary.com/1%20A%20Sheffield%20RE%20Syllabus%202014%20Final.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> [http://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/3124/thinking\\_enquiry\\_creativity\\_response-oldham\\_religious\\_education\\_syllabus\\_2014\\_-2019](http://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/3124/thinking_enquiry_creativity_response-oldham_religious_education_syllabus_2014_-2019)

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/education-and-learning/cornwall-learning/advice-and-support/standing-advisory-council-for-religious-education/sacre-agreed-syllabus/?page=7813>

<sup>34</sup> [http://www.richmond.gov.uk/sacre\\_syllabus\\_2014.pdf](http://www.richmond.gov.uk/sacre_syllabus_2014.pdf)

As long ago as in its 1989 Handbook for SACREs, ASCs and Schools, the REC stated that one generally accepted aim of RE would be, 'To encourage knowledge and understanding of religions and similar world views.' Even then this usage was no novelty and there has been a general acceptance among RE teachers and specialists for over fifty years that an RE that does not pay some attention to non-religious worldviews is incomplete. The RE Subject Framework uses the word 'worldviews' because all the alternative terms: 'beliefs', 'non-religious beliefs' or 'secular philosophies' are ambiguous and easily misunderstood. The Framework has a footnote explaining that 'The phrase 'religions and worldviews' is used to refer to Christianity, other principal religions represented in Britain, smaller religious communities and non-religious worldviews such as Humanism. The phrase is meant to be inclusive.' This very clearly delimits what is meant by the phrase.

It was used in the Secretary of State in his forward to the Framework: 'All children need to acquire core knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and practices of the religions and worldviews which not only shape their history and culture but which guide their own development... This RE curriculum framework... has the endorsement of a very wide range of professional organisations and bodies representing faiths and other worldviews. I hope the document will be useful to all those seeking to provide RE of the highest quality for young people in our schools.'

## **Annex 2: Widespread support for the study of Humanism**

### **Letter supporting inclusion**

Dear Mr Gibb,

We are startled to see that the new GCSE and AS and A level Religious Studies criteria, currently being consulted on by the Government, do not propose to allow for the systematic study of non-religious worldviews. Annexes at GCSE prescribe content for each of the principal religions but there is no equivalent annex for Humanism, even though one was provided to the Department. This is completely out of step with Religious Education as it is taught in many schools today, which reflects the fact that while many young people nowadays hold religious beliefs, many others hold non-religious beliefs, and both religious and non-religious beliefs influence most young people.

The latest RE curriculum framework for teaching prior to GCSE level was produced last year and recommends the study of non-religious worldviews like Humanism alongside religions – a simple codification of the developing place of non-religious beliefs in RE which has evolved over many decades. It was endorsed by the then Secretary of State, who in his foreword made explicit approving reference to teaching non-religious worldviews.

Now the Government is proposing to turn the clock back, ignoring the experience of young people, the current practice of teachers, and the requirements of a rigorous education. We urge you to think again.

Yours sincerely,

#### **Philosophers and other academics (non-RE):**

1. Dr Catharine Abell, Senior Lecturer in Philosophy, University of Manchester
2. Dr Arif Ahmed, Senior Lecturer in Philosophy, University of Cambridge
3. David Archard, Professor of Philosophy, Queen's University Belfast
4. Dr Julian Baggini, philosopher and author
5. Helen Beebee, Samuel Hall Professor of Philosophy, University of Manchester
6. Simon Blackburn, former Professor of Philosophy, University of Cambridge, Fellow, Trinity College Cambridge, and Distinguished Professor of Philosophy, UNC-Chapel Hill
7. Margaret A. Boden, Research Professor of Cognitive Science, University of Sussex
8. Dr Stephen Burwood, Lecturer in Philosophy, University of Hull
9. Dr Claire Cassidy, Senior Lecturer and Course Leader, Postgraduate Certificate in Philosophy with Children, University of Strathclyde
10. Dr Peter Cave, Lecturer in Philosophy, Open University
11. Andrew Chitty, Senior Lecturer in Philosophy, University of Sussex
12. Andy Clark, Professor of Logic and Metaphysics, University of Edinburgh
13. Michael Clark, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, University of Nottingham
14. Antony Duff, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, University of Stirling
15. John Dupré, Professor of Philosophy of Science, University of Exeter
16. Dr Nicholas Everitt, Senior Research Fellow in Philosophy, University of East Anglia
17. Simon Glendinning, Professor of European Philosophy, LSE
18. A. C. Grayling, philosopher and Master of the New College of the Humanities
19. Dr Peter King, Lecturer in Philosophy, University of Oxford
20. Dr Brendan Larvor, Reader in Philosophy and Head of Philosophy, University of Hertfordshire
21. Dr Stephen Law, Senior Lecturer in Philosophy, Heythrop College, University of London

22. Ardon Lyon, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, City University London
23. D. H. Mellor, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, University of Cambridge
24. Peter Millican, Gilbert Ryle Fellow and Professor of Philosophy, University of Oxford
25. Richard Norman, Emeritus Professor of Moral Philosophy, University of Kent
26. Eric Olson, Professor of Philosophy, University of Sheffield
27. David Papineau, Professor of Philosophy, King's College London
28. Derek Parfit, Professor of Philosophy, University of Oxford
29. Duncan Pritchard, Professor and Chair in Epistemology, University of Edinburgh
30. Janet Radcliffe Richards, Professor of Practical Philosophy, University of Oxford
31. Jonathan Rée, philosopher and author
32. Theodore Scaltsas, Professor and Chair of Ancient Philosophy, University of Edinburgh
33. Peter Simons, Professor of Philosophy, Chair of Moral Philosophy and Head of the School of Social Sciences and Philosophy, Trinity College Dublin
34. Kate Soper, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, London Metropolitan University
35. Tom Sorell, Professor of Politics and Philosophy, University of Warwick
36. Dr Tanja Staehler, Reader in Philosophy and Head of the Department of Philosophy, University of Sussex
37. Raymond Tallis, philosopher and Emeritus Professor of Geriatric Medicine, University of Manchester
38. Thomas Uebel, Professor of Philosophy, University of Manchester
39. Dr Nigel Warburton, philosopher and author
40. Keith Ward, Regius Professor Emeritus of Divinity, University of Oxford
41. John White, Emeritus Professor of the Philosophy of Education, Institute of Education, University of London
42. Stephen Wilkinson, Professor of Bioethics, Lancaster University

**RE professionals (other than teachers):**

43. David Aldridge, Principal Lecturer in Philosophy of Education and Programme Lead for Professional Education, Oxford Brookes University
44. Phil André, RE teacher, university lecturer and SACRE advisor
45. Maxine Beech, RE teacher and research fellow, Farmington Institute
46. Revd Kevin Blogg, RE consultant and SACRE advisor, Norfolk
47. Revd Robert Boulter, Associate Principal Lecturer in Primary Education, Leeds Trinity University and consultant, Leeds SACRE
48. Alan Brine, former HMI and National Lead for Religious Education within Ofsted (2007-2014)
49. Roger Butler, RE consultant and SACRE advisor, London
50. George Casley, lecturer and RE consultant
51. Denise Chaplin, RE advisor, London
52. Mark Chater, Director of a Christian educational charity supporting research, development and innovation in RE and former Senior Adviser for RE, Qualifications & Curriculum Development Agency (2006-10)
53. Andrew Copson, Chief Executive, British Humanist Association and board member, Religious Education Council for England and Wales
54. Trevor Cooling, Professor of Christian Education and Director of National Institute for Christian Education Research, Canterbury Christ Church University
55. Denise Cush, Professor of Religion and Education, Bath Spa University
56. Dr Wendy Dossett, Senior Lecturer in Religious Studies, University of Chester
57. Dr Nigel Fancourt, Lecturer, Department of Education, University of Oxford
58. Dave Francis, education consultant and SACRE advisor

59. Brian Gates, Emeritus Professor of Religion, Ethics & Education, University of Cumbria and former Chair of the Religious Education Council of England and Wales (1984-90 and 2002-11)
60. David Harris, education consultant and Senior Member, Wolfson College, University of Cambridge
61. Paul Hopkins, Lecturer in Education, University of Hull
62. Alex Howard, former Visiting Lecturer in Philosophy at Newcastle University and former RE teacher
63. Robert Jackson, Professor of Education and former Director, Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit (1994-2012)
64. Sarah Lane-Cawte, board member and Chair of Governance Committee, Religious Education Council for England and Wales
65. Jonny Lawson, Head of RE, West Sussex and executive member, National Association of Teachers of RE
66. Phil Leivers, board member and Chair of Professional Development Committee, Religious Education Council for England and Wales
67. Doreen Massey, Baroness Massey of Darwen, educationalist
68. Nora Leonard, education consultant and SACRE advisor, London
69. Ed Pawson, Chair, National Association of Teachers of RE
70. Lesley Prior, RE consultant, SACRE advisor, and Senior Lecturer in Religious Education, University of Roehampton
71. Revd Michael J Reiss, Professor of Science Education, Institute of Education, University of London
72. Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain, Maidenhead Synagogue
73. Alastair Ross, RE Consultant and SACRE advisor, West Yorkshire
74. Stephen Shashoua, Director, 3FF (Three Faiths Forum)
75. Dr Jacqueline Watson, Visiting Fellow in Education and former Director of the Centre for Spirituality and Religion in Education, University of East Anglia
76. Andrew Wright, Professor of Religious Education, Institute of Education

#### **RE teachers:**

77. Joanne Bagnall, RE Co-ordinator, Nook Lane Junior School, Sheffield
78. Hayley Bennett, RE Teacher, City of Bradford
79. Dr Robin M. Bevan, Headteacher, Southend High School for Boys
80. Ben Britton, Head of RE, Garth Hill College, Bracknell
81. Katie Brook, RE Teacher, Bracknell
82. Ellen Chisman, RE Teacher, Kirklees
83. Shirley Dang, RE Coordinator and Early Years Teacher, Hackney
84. Ms L Douglas, Philosophy and Ethics Teacher
85. Andrew Duffield, Humanities Co-ordinator, Haltwhistle Community Campus, Northumberland
86. Malachy Fivey, Head of Religious Studies and Philosophy, Aberdour School, Tadworth
87. Peter Gray, Primary Teacher, Derbyshire
88. Mike Harrison, former ESOL teacher, London
89. Helen Hodgson, RE Teacher
90. Laura Harvey, Head of Religious Studies, Newstead Wood School, Bromley
91. Amy Hyde, Teacher of Belief and Ethics, Suffolk
92. Jon Knight, Head of Philosophy and Ethics, Worcestershire
93. Ben Maddison, RE teacher, Southend High School for Boys
94. Alexandra Maxted, RE teacher, Hampshire

95. David Moffat, RE Teacher, Kingsbury High School, Brent
96. Max Mulvaney, RE Teacher, Blenheim High School, Epsom
97. Clare O'Brien, RS & Philosophy teacher and teacher trainer, Graveney School, Wandsworth
98. Margaret O'Sullivan, Head of RE, St. John's School, Episkopi, Cyprus
99. Iain Paterson, former HMI with responsibility for religious education
100. Shammi Rahman, RE teacher, Milton Keynes
101. Claire Sadler-Penn, Deputy Head Teacher, Nottingham
102. Alice Severs, former Deputy Head Teacher
103. Louise Stinchcombe, RE Teacher
104. Francesca Thomas, Secondary Teacher of RE and Philosophy, Cornwall
105. Rebecca Ward, Head of Department for Philosophy and Theology, Graveney School, Wandsworth
106. Richard Woffenden, Ethics, Religion, Ideas and Citizenship Teacher, Royds Hall Community School, Huddersfield
107. Hannah Yearsley, Teacher of Religious Studies, Humanities and Citizenship, Kent

**Authors:**

108. Jonathan Emmett, children's author
109. Matt Haig, writer, children's author and journalist
110. Natalie Haynes, writer, children's author and broadcaster
111. Michael Rosen, children's author, poet, former Children's Laureate and co-author, *What is Humanism?* (forthcoming, April, 2015)
112. Alom Shaha, author, *The Young Atheist's Handbook*
113. Annemarie Young, Senior Member, Hughes Hall, University of Cambridge, and co-author, *What is Humanism?* (forthcoming, April, 2015)

**Messages from RE professionals, philosophers, parents and pupils supporting inclusion**

**RE Council for England and Wales:** The REC told its members that at its September Board meeting, 'Board members agreed that should the consultation criteria fail to include the option for systematic study of a non-religious worldview in parallel with study of a religion, then the REC's response would note this as unacceptable in relation to the RE Review, the REC's vision and on general educational grounds.'

Upon publication of the criteria, the REC provided a statement to the BHA saying that 'In our most recent curriculum document, *Religious education: a national curriculum framework*, we made clear our policy that religious education in schools and colleges should include the study of non-religious worldviews alongside religious traditions. Dr Joyce Miller, Chair of the REC, said 'The REC Board has agreed unanimously that the optional systematic study of a non-religious worldview should be introduced at GCSE level. We want to promote a rigorous and inclusive study of religions and beliefs that is relevant and challenging for young people of all faiths and none.'

**3FF:** 3FF, also known as the Three Faiths Forum, is an organisation that runs dialogue workshops in schools and 'faith' school linking programmes. These initiatives have been widely critically acclaimed. Director of 3FF Stephen Shashoua said of the consultation, 'The current suggestions don't go far enough. Young people need an opportunity to learn about non-religious worldviews as well as religious, and develop an understanding of actual lived diversity in the UK, not just abstract facts.'

**Individual messages provided upon publication of the criteria:** Ben Britton, Head of RE at Garth Hill College, Bracknell, told us, 'I am supporting this as a Christian and I very much hope that no-one

thinks that it is only humanists pushing for this change. Humanism sits well alongside other worldviews and is essential for pupils who sometimes struggle to connect with traditional religious ideas. If we value all belief systems excluding humanism doesn't make sense to me.'

Shammi Rahman, an RE Teacher in Milton Keynes, told us, 'As a Muslim and an experienced RE teacher, I think it is appalling that humanism is not being included. I have always taught non-religious perspectives in my lessons and will continue to do so. Those calling for inclusion have my support.'

16-year old Aneira Carter, from Hackney, told us, 'I'm in year twelve so have just finished my GCSEs. I enjoyed Religious Education very much in lower school, however I felt the curriculum was very limited in its exploration of non-religious viewpoints. This was the main reason for why I decided not to take Religious Studies at GCSE. I think that RS is a very important subject and is key in helping children understand the world and help them develop into understanding and respectful adults. However as a humanist I think that the GCSE RS course does not include my views and the views of many other atheists and humanists wanting to study religion and we feel excluded by the lack of education about our beliefs. RS needs to be taught to my generation but the current curriculum is just not representative of our beliefs today.'

Natalie Raja, a parent from Richmond-upon-Thames, told us, 'My husband is a Muslim but I am a humanist and it seems crazy, to me, that our children will be able to systematically study his beliefs at school but not mine. Both our worldviews are well thought out and compassionate outlooks on life – so why the discriminatory treatment?'

Simon Blackburn, former Professor of Philosophy at the University of Cambridge, told us, 'It is impossible to get a complete view of the religious landscape without also studying non-religious beliefs. The non-religious have so much to say about religions that to take one without equally taking the other is to deny all pupils – whether religious or not – a full understanding of this vital subject.'

Dr Peter King, Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Oxford, told us, 'Humanism is not a religion but at the same time, it is clear that Religious Education is the natural home on our current curriculum for the study of non-religious worldviews. This is because the justifications given for RE's importance, such as its contributions to community cohesion, to understanding those different from ourselves, and to being able to address life's big questions, only make sense if RE is fully inclusive of all major worldviews, whether religious or not.'

Richard Norman, Emeritus Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Kent, told us, 'Religious Education is not just a matter of learning about religions. Its deeper purpose is to help young people to articulate and explore their own beliefs and values, especially when they reach GCSE age and are gaining the confidence to think for themselves and reach their own conclusions. Two-thirds of teenagers have no religious beliefs. If the GCSE syllabus does not help them to examine and deepen their understanding of humanist and other non-religious beliefs, it will be failing the majority of our young people.'

### Annex 3: Changes we would want to the subject criteria

In what follows, we have underlined any text we would like to see added, and ~~struck out~~ any text we wish to see removed.

#### GCSE Religious Studies part one

In practice for the full course, we would want the programme of study amended to read:

*[5.] Study of religion and non-religious worldviews: the beliefs and teachings and sources of wisdom and authority (topics a and b from Part One) in relation to two religions or one religion and one non-religious worldview (making up 50% of the overall qualification weighting, shared equally between the two religions or one religion and one non-religious worldview)...*

OR

*study all four topics from Part One in relation to a primary religion or non-religious worldview (50% of the overall qualification weighting); AND beliefs and teachings and sources of wisdom and authority (topics a and b from Part One) in relation to a second religion or first non-religious worldview (25% of the qualification)...*

For the short course, we would want specifications to offer the opportunity to either:

*[19.] study beliefs and teachings and sources of wisdom and authority (topics a and b from Part One) in relation to two religions or one religion and one non-religious worldview, OR study beliefs and teachings (topic a from Part One) only in relation to two religions or one religion and one non-religious worldview...*

We do not see the need to allow for the study of two non-religious worldviews as in practice there is only one non-religious worldview that is significantly common to merit an annex in its own right, namely Humanism.

Similarly, we would want to see the four topics in the subject content amended to specify:

- a. *beliefs and teachings of religion or non-religious worldviews: beliefs about God, gods or ultimate reality; the role of communities of faith or belief, key moral principles and the meanings and purposes of human life*
- b. *sources of wisdom and authority: the nature, history and treatment of key ~~religious~~ texts or scriptures; and where appropriate, of key ~~religious~~ figures and/or teachers from the early history of the tradition and/or the modern age*
- c. *practices: the application of beliefs and teachings to the lives of modern believers including (as appropriate to each religion or non-religious worldview) the study of places and forms of worship, ~~(as appropriate to each religion)~~ rituals, prayer, meditation, festivals and celebrations, fasting, rites of passage, religious journeys and pilgrimage*
- d. *forms of expression and ways of life: the impact of beliefs on individuals, communities and societies through ways of life and moral codes, through art forms such as drama, dance, literature, architecture and music inspired by religions ~~and belief~~ or non-religious worldviews, and the role of these art forms in worship or ritual*

– although it would be helpful if even bolder amendments are made to ensure inclusivity.

Finally, we are submitting as an annex to this consultation response an annex on Humanism that we would want to see sit alongside the seven annexes on the principal religions.

## **GCSE Religious Studies part two**

In practice, for the full course, we would only want the programme of study amended to read:

*7. Specifications may offer students the ability to study the themes within Part 2 in relation to differing perspectives from either one or two religions or one religion and one non-religious worldview. Where students approach a theme in relation to one religion, they must study differing perspectives from within that religion in order to ensure they meet the assessment objectives.*

Again, we would not see the need for students to only be able to study one non-religious worldview. We strongly support young people learning about a broad range of religions and non-religious worldviews and would not want it to be possible for non-religious worldviews to be the only area of study.

The 'textual studies' area, as currently drafted, is somewhat challenging for non-religious worldviews, as many such worldviews, such as Humanism, do not have 'primary texts'. However, we believe something along the following lines would be sufficient:

*14. If following a textual studies approach, all students must investigate primary religious texts from one or both of the religions they have studied for Part One: Study of Religions, or both primary religious texts from the one religion and highly influential publications from the non-religious worldview they have studied for Part One: Study of Religions...*

*15. Specifications must require students to demonstrate an understanding of these three issues in relation to the text as whole, while also studying themes of central concern to the ~~religious~~ text they are exploring.*

*16. Specifications should prescribe the study of clearly referenced material from the particular religion, worldview or religions selected. A single extended extract or multiple shorter ones from one or several texts may be specified, but taken as a whole the material must be sufficient to enable the themes to be explored thoroughly, for different perspectives to be explored and for the assessment objectives to be met.*

*17. Decisions about the number and length of the extracts must take account of the level of challenge posed by the comprehension of the material and whether the selection is taken from one ~~religious~~ tradition or two.*

For the 'religious, philosophical and ethical studies in the modern world' section, we would want to see the content read:

*[18. Students] should demonstrate the depth of their understanding of religion and non-religious worldviews through the application of teachings from religions and ~~beliefs~~ worldviews including through specific references to sources of wisdom and authority.*

With respect to the themes, we would want to see the content amended in the following ways:

- a. *accounts in texts of key events in the lives of founders or important ~~religious~~ figures, or important ideas that they had, their significance and impact, including on life in the 21st century...*
- b. *the significance, importance and impact of ~~religious~~ texts as a source for ~~religious~~ law making and codes for living in the 21st century...*
- ...
- d. *relationships and families, religious teachings and/or non-religious beliefs about the nature and purpose of families in the 21st century, sex, marriage, cohabitation and divorce. Issues related to the nature and purpose of families; roles of men and women; equality; gender prejudice and discrimination...*
- e. *religious and/or non-religious views of the world, including their relationship to scientific views; beliefs about death and an afterlife; explanations of the origins of the universe...*
- f. *the existence of God, gods and ultimate reality, and ways in which God, gods or ultimate reality might be understood or reasons they might be rejected; through revelation, visions, miracles or enlightenment...*
- ...
- i. *dialogue within and between religions and non-religious beliefs; how those with religious and non-religious beliefs respond to critiques of their beliefs including the study of a range of attitudes towards those with different ~~religious~~ views – inclusivist, exclusivist and pluralist approaches...*
- j. *religion, non-religious worldviews, human rights and social justice; issues of equality and freedom of religion or belief; prejudice and discrimination in religion and belief; human rights; wealth and poverty; racial prejudice and discrimination...*

## **AS and A Level Religious Studies**

We would want to see the aims and objectives changed to add references to non-religious worldviews alongside references to religion/s.

With respect to 'Systematic Study of one Religion', we would want it to be possible to systematically study one non-religious worldview, and have appropriate re-wording throughout, i.e.:

9. *At AS and A level this includes the study of:*

- *religious or non-religious beliefs, values and teaching in their diverse manifestations in history and in the contemporary world, including those linked to the nature and existence of God or ultimate reality, the role of ~~the community of~~ for believers or non-believers, key moral principles, beliefs about the self, death and afterlife, beliefs about ~~the meaning and purpose of~~ in life*
- *sources of authority and wisdom including, where appropriate; scripture and/or sacred or influential texts and how they are used and treated ~~by believers~~; key ~~religious~~ figures and/or teachers and how they are regarded in relation to other sources of wisdom and authority*
- ...
- *forms of expression inspired and influenced by religion and religious belief or non-religious worldviews and beliefs*

10. *In addition at A level this includes the study of:*

- *significant social and historical developments in theology, ~~or~~ religious or non-religious thought including the ~~challenges~~ influences of secularism, science, responses to pluralism*

*and diversity within traditions, migration, the changing roles of men and women, feminist and liberationist approaches*

...

- *two themes related to issues of identity and belonging for ~~religious~~ believers or non-believers today such as dietary and dress codes, the compatibility of (non-)religious and other forms of identity, issues of equality in the freedom to ~~practice~~ manifest a religion or non-religious worldview*
- *religious and non-religious tolerance, respect and recognition, ~~interfaith~~ dialogue and the ways that religious and non-religious worldviews ~~traditions~~ view other religious traditions worldviews and their truth-claims*
- *how developments in beliefs and practices have, over time, influenced and been influenced by developments in philosophical, ethical and social scientific studies of religion and non-religious worldviews or by textual interpretation*

With respect to 'Philosophical, Ethical and Social Scientific Studies of Religion', we would want to see the following changes:

11. At AS and A level this includes the study of:

...

- *two contrasting approaches to religion or non-religious worldviews and religious or non-religious experience chosen from the fields of psychology, sociology and anthropology*

12. In addition at A level this includes the study of:

...

- *a comparison of the key ideas presented in works of at least two key scholars selected from the fields of the philosophy of religion, ~~religious~~ ethics and/or social scientific study of religion or non-religious worldviews and developments in the way these ideas are applied to contemporary issues in religion and belief*
- *how philosophical, ethical and social scientific studies have, over time, influenced and been influenced by developments in religious or non-religious beliefs and practices or textual interpretation*

Turning to 'Textual Studies', again we would want students to be able to study a non-religious worldview. However, we would not want students to be able to study a non-religious worldview for both their 'Systematic Study' and 'Textual Studies', as we want students to be exposed to a diversity of perspectives. Therefore we would be happy to see a statement added saying that students may only study a non-religious worldview if they have not done so in their 'systematic study of one religion or non-religious worldview' (and by implication, vice versa).

In terms of the content of 'Textual Studies':

13. *Specifications should prescribe the study of clearly referenced texts from one religion or non-religious worldview...*

...

15. At AS and A level this includes the study of:

- *selected text(s) or substantial passages in translation from a particular ~~religious~~ work or corpus of scripture, examining the meaning of the material, its literary features, ideas, authorship and audience and its relationship with other texts and/or sources of wisdom and authority from the religion or non-religious worldview.*

- *legal/ theological/ ethical content and the role of a text or texts in ~~religious~~-law making and codes for living*
- *...*
- *the ways in which the text(s) are interpreted and used by ~~religious~~-communities and how these have changed over time*
- *the religious or non-religious, cultural and other significance of the text(s) including its reception and influence beyond ~~a~~ its religious or non-religious community*

16. *In addition at A level this includes the study of:*

- *...*
- *the scientific and historical-critical challenges to the authority of texts and ~~religious~~ responses to these*
- *modern critical scholarship including different contemporary approaches, religious and non-religious, to the primary text or corpus, and the religious, non-religious or intellectual assumptions that underpin them*
- *how textual interpretations have, over time, influenced and been influenced by developments in philosophical, ethical and social scientific studies of religion or non-religious worldviews or developments in religious or non-religious thought (as set out above for systematic study of religion)*

The general requirements in paragraphs 17-20 should also be amended to use inclusive language.

## **Annex 4: What a Part One annex on Humanism might look like**

### **Humanism**

All specifications must cover the following core knowledge and understanding, which represents 100% of the content for Part One.

#### **Beliefs and teachings**

- definitions of 'Humanism';<sup>i</sup> a recent label<sup>ii</sup> for a type of non-religious worldview often found throughout history; application to non-religious people who don't identify their beliefs as being humanist<sup>iii</sup>
- beliefs about reason, evidence, and scientific investigation as the way to discover truth about reality (Bertrand Russell);<sup>iv</sup> including the origins of human life, evolution and the big bang; the scientific method and the provisional nature of all claims to knowledge<sup>v</sup>
- beliefs about god, gods and the supernatural;<sup>vi</sup> atheism, agnosticism, and the distinction between them;<sup>vii</sup> the problem of evil and suffering (Epicurus, David Hume, John Stuart Mill)
- beliefs about death as the end of personal existence; attitudes to death and mortality; beliefs about the special value of human life as the only life we have<sup>viii</sup>
- how humanists find meaning and purpose in life (John Stuart Mill); the idea of meaning in life as created, not discovered; how these ideas differ from any concept of 'ultimate meaning' in the universe<sup>ix</sup>
- beliefs about morality originating naturally but refined by human thought and experience of living in communities; about the bases of morality in reason, concern for others, and consideration of consequences, rather than in fixed rules;<sup>x</sup> Plato's Euthyphro dilemma
- the principle of the 'Golden Rule'; beliefs about its universality amongst worldviews;<sup>xi</sup> the balance between individual autonomy and social responsibility

#### **Sources of wisdom and authority**

- beliefs about the need for critical examination of all texts and traditions; about there being no 'sacred' texts, and about many cultural traditions being potential sources of wisdom<sup>xii</sup>

Key figures and stages in the evolving humanist tradition:<sup>xiii</sup>

- The ancient world – Socrates and critical enquiry – the beginning of a rationalistic and scientific worldview – ancient atomism, Epicurus; Mencius<sup>xiv</sup>

- humanist ideas in medieval Islamic world; co-existence of Christian and humanist ideas in the Renaissance – new interest in the human individual and the portrayal of the human form<sup>xv</sup>
- The scientific revolution – emerging tensions between science and religion (Copernicus, Galileo)<sup>xvi</sup>
- Scientific method and religious scepticism (David Hume, the Enlightenment, The impact of biblical criticism)<sup>xvii</sup>
- The repercussions of Darwin and evolution. The crisis of faith in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Matthew Arnold)<sup>xviii</sup>
- Secular approaches to morality and ethics (utilitarianism, John Stuart Mill, Bertrand Russell). Toleration, liberal values and freedom of speech and thought (Mary Wollstonecraft)<sup>xix</sup>
- The modern global community, secularisation, pluralism and diversity; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the Amsterdam Declaration 2002<sup>xx</sup>

## Practices

- distinctive motivations for specific altruistic work;<sup>xxi</sup> non-religious pastoral support including end of life care,<sup>xxii</sup> celebrancy<sup>xxiii</sup>
- perspectives on social values: openness, cooperation, free inquiry, discussion and participation
- beliefs about the need to review all personal and social practices as circumstances and knowledge change<sup>xxiv</sup>
- festivals as natural and cultural; attitudes to religious festivals including Christmas<sup>xxv</sup>
- places and spaces with a special significance; secular equivalents to pilgrimage<sup>xxvi</sup>
- approaches to significant rites of passage, including humanist ceremonies – baby namings, weddings, funerals<sup>xxvii</sup>
- the organised humanist movement in Britain and globally<sup>xxviii</sup>

## Forms of expression and ways of life

- the pursuit of ‘the good life’, human wellbeing and flourishing (John Stuart Mill); acceptance that different preferences and talents give rise to diversity of ways of living<sup>xxix</sup>
- advocacy of the secular state as equally welcoming to all religions and beliefs;<sup>xxx</sup> freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief;<sup>xxxi</sup> John Stuart Mill’s harm principle as a limit to these freedoms

- the high value placed on individual expression; non-religious and secular communities; the lack of any obligation to participate in organised Humanism
- approaches to wellbeing, including ‘whole person’ ideas of personal development through integrated selves and connections with other people and the natural world<sup>xxxii</sup>
- international expressions of Humanism including use of the ‘Happy Human’ symbol<sup>xxxiii</sup>
- perspectives on the treatment of other animals – food production and consumption, medical testing and domestically<sup>xxxiv</sup>
- expression of humanist attitudes in art, e.g. in depictions of the human person: in Greek Classical Age sculpture, in Dutch Golden Age realist painting, in contemporary portrait photography<sup>xxxv</sup>
- relevant themes in literature by humanists or with humanist inspiration: the poetry of Thomas Hardy and novels and essays of George Eliot, Virginia Woolf, E M Forster, and Philip Pullman
- scientists, their humanist influences and perspectives – historical figures including T H Huxley, Marie Curie and Albert Einstein, and contemporaries including Jim Al-Khalili and Alice Roberts

Common and divergent views between humanists in the way beliefs are understood and expressed should be included throughout.

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<sup>i</sup> The British Humanist Association’s explanation of Humanism is at <https://humanism.org.uk/humanism/>

The International Humanist and Ethical Union’s explanation of Humanism is at <http://iheu.org/humanism/what-is-humanism/>

The Amsterdam Declaration 2002 is recognized by IHEU and its member bodies as the official defining statement of World Humanism: <http://iheu.org/humanism/the-amsterdam-declaration/>

Further definitions that may be looked at include:

- ‘a morally concerned style of intellectual atheism openly avowed by only a small minority of individuals ... but tacitly accepted by a wide spectrum of educated people in all parts of the Western world.’ – Richard L. Gregory, *Oxford Companion to the Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987)
- ‘A philosophy or set of beliefs, that holds that human beings achieve a system of morality through their own reasoning rather than through a belief in any divine being.’ – John Andrews, *The Economist Book of -isms: From Abolitionism to Zoroastrianism* (London: Wiley, 2010)
- ‘...an appeal to reason in contrast to revelation or religious authority as a means of finding out about the natural world and destiny of man, and also giving a grounding for morality ... Humanist ethics is also distinguished by placing the end of moral action in the welfare of humanity rather than in fulfilling the will of God.’ – Ted Honderich (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 1st edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995)
- ‘...any position which stresses the importance of persons, typically in contrast with something else, such as God, inanimate nature, or totalitarian societies.’ – David Crystal (ed.), *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990)
- ‘...a commitment to the perspective, interests and centrality of human persons; a belief in reason and autonomy as foundational aspects of human existence; a belief that reason, scepticism and the scientific method are the only appropriate instruments for discovering truth and structuring the

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human community; a belief that the foundations for ethics and society are to be found in autonomy and moral equality...’ – Edward Craig and Edward Craig (eds.), *Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2000)

- ‘Believing that it is possible to live confidently without metaphysical or religious certainty and that all opinions are open to revision and correction, [humanists] see human flourishing as dependent on open communication, discussion, criticism and unforced consensus.’ – Robert Audi (ed.), *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 1st edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)

<sup>ii</sup> The first known use of the noun ‘humanist’ in English is Publius Virgilius Maro, *The Georgiks of Publius Virgilius Maro*, trans. A.F. (Abraham Fleming) (London, 1589). The first appearances of the noun ‘humanism’ in English in print were in the nineteenth century and were both translations of the recent German coinage *humanismus*.

<sup>iii</sup> An Ipsos Mori poll from October 2006 found that 36 per cent of British adults chose only humanist answers in response to a series of questions about science and morality: <https://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/190/Humanist-Beliefs.aspx>

<sup>iv</sup> ‘What sort of thing is it reasonable to believe without proof? I should reply: the facts of sense-experience and the principles of mathematics and logic – including the inductive logic employed in science. These are things which we can hardly bring ourselves to doubt, and as to which there is a large measure of agreement among mankind.’ – Bertrand Russell in *What I Believe: Broadcast Talks* (London: Porcupine Press, 1948), p. 17

‘It stands to the everlasting credit of science that by acting on the human mind it has overcome man’s insecurity before himself and before nature... the Greeks for the first time wrought a system of thought whose conclusions no one could escape. The scientists of the Renaissance then devised the combination of systematic experiment with mathematical method... there was no longer room for basic differences of opinion in natural science... Since that time each generation has built up the heritage of knowledge and understanding, without the slightest danger of a crisis that might jeopardize the whole structure... [we] can register at least one great and important gain: confidence that human thought is dependable and natural law universal.’ – Albert Einstein, ‘Science and Society’ (originally 1935), repr. in *Einstein on Humanism* (New York: Citadel Press, 1993), p. 13

<sup>v</sup> ‘The notion that a man shall judge for himself what he is told, sifting the evidence and weighing the conclusions, is of course implicit in the outlook of science. But it begins before that as a positive and active constituent of humanism. For evidently the notion implies not only that man is free to judge, but that he is able to judge. This is an assertion of confidence which goes back to a contemporary of Socrates [Protagoras], and claims (as Plato quotes him) that ‘man is the measure of all things’. In humanism, man is all things: he is both the expression and the master of the creation.’ – Jacob Bronowski, ‘Science as a Humanistic Discipline’, in *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, 24/8 (1968)

‘We must constantly check the results of our reasoning process against the facts, and see if they fit. If they don’t fit, we must respect the facts, and conclude that our reasoning was mistaken.’ – J. B. S. Haldane, *What I Believe: Broadcast Talks* (London: Porcupine Press, 1948), p. 50

<sup>vi</sup> ‘Behind the tangible, visible world of Nature there is said to be an intangible, invisible world. Not, of course, in the sense that atomic particles are hidden from sight; they belong to the same world as the grosser objects of everyday experience. They are physical because they obey the laws of physics. But the supersensible world of the dualistic religions is outside nature; it is supernatural, or if you are squeamish about the word, supra-natural.’ – Hector Hawton, *The Humanist Revolution* (London: Pemberton, 1963), p. 18

<sup>vii</sup> Jim Herrick, *Humanism: An Introduction* (London: Rationalist Press Association, 2003; 2nd edn. 2009), chapter 5 (Humanism and Religion)

<sup>viii</sup> ‘I believe that when I die I shall rot, and nothing of my ego will survive. I am not young and I love life. But I should scorn to shiver with terror at the thought of annihilation ... Many a man has borne himself proudly on the scaffold; surely the same pride should teach us to think truly about our place in the world. Even if the open

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windows of science at first make us shiver ... in the end fresh air brings vigour, and the great spaces have a splendour of their own.’ – Bertrand Russell quoted in Margaret Knight (ed.), *The Humanist Anthology* (London: Barrie & Rockliff, 1961), p. 142

‘Take the idea that life can only have a meaning if it never ends. It is certainly not the case that in general only endless activities can be meaningful. Indeed, usually the contrary is true: there being some end or completion is often required for an activity to have any meaning.’ – Julian Baggini, *Atheism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 69

‘The dictator... can grind down his citizens till they are all alike, but he cannot melt them into a single man... The memory of birth and the expectation of death always lurk within the human being, making him separate from his fellows and consequently capable of intercourse with them.’ – E. M. Forster, ‘What I Believe’ (from 1939), in id., *Two Cheers for Democracy* (London: Edward Arnold, 1959), p. 84

‘A little while and you will be nobody and nowhere nor will anything which you now behold exist, nor one of those who are now alive. Nature’s Law is that all things change and turn, and pass away, so that in due order different things may come to be...’ – Marcus Aurelius quoted in Knight (ed.), *The Humanist Anthology* (1961), p. 21

‘From the Hymn of Empedocles’ by Matthew Arnold, in Cherrington (ed.), *Facing the World*, pp. 192–193, also at <http://www.bartleby.com/101/754.html>

<sup>ix</sup> ‘We are here because one odd group of fishes had a peculiar fin anatomy that could transform into legs for terrestrial creatures; because the earth never froze entirely during an ice age; because a small and tenuous species, arising in Africa a quarter of a million years ago, has managed, so far, to survive by hook and by crook. We may yearn for a ‘higher answer’ – but none exists.’ – Stephen J. Gould, quoted in Warren Allen Smith (ed.), *Who’s Who in Hell* (New York: Barricade Books, 2000), p. 450

‘[The phrase ‘the meaning of life’] is sometimes used in the sense of a deeper, hidden meaning – something like the hidden meaning of an epigram, or of a poem... but the wisdom of some poets and perhaps also of some philosophers has taught us that the phrase ‘the meaning of life’ can be understood in a different way; that the meaning of life may not be something hidden and perhaps discoverable but, rather, something with which we ourselves can endow our lives. We can bestow a meaning upon our lives through our work, through our active conduct, through our whole way of life, and through the attitude we adopt towards our friends and our fellow men and towards the world...’ – Karl Popper, ‘Emancipation through Knowledge’, in A. J. Ayer (ed.), *The Humanist Outlook* (London: Pemberton Publishing, 1968), p. 282

<sup>x</sup> ‘All men have a mind which cannot bear to see the sufferings of others ... to be without this distress is not human... Since we all have [this principle and others] in ourselves, let us know to give them all their development and completion, and the issue will be like that of a fire which has begun to burn, or of a spring which has begun to find vent. Let them have their full development, and they will suffice to love and protect all within the four seas...’ – Mencius, *Kung-sun Ch’au*, book 2, pt. 1, ch. 6, trans. James Legge at <http://nothingistic.org/library/mencius/>

‘I have never yet met the child – and I have met very few adults – to whom it has ever occurred to raise the question: ‘Why should I consider others?’ Most people are prepared to accept as a completely self-evident moral axiom that we must not be completely selfish, and if we base our moral training on that we shall, I suggest, be building on firm enough foundations.’ – Margaret Knight, *Morals Without Religion and Other Essays* (London: Denis Dobson, 1955), pp. 49–50

‘all human beings, not a favoured few, have an equal claim to happiness’ – Hawton, *The Humanist Revolution*, p. 14, on the Utilitarians

<sup>xi</sup> ‘British Humanist Association’s ‘Golden Rule’ poster, 2014: <http://humanismforschools.org.uk/case-studies/resource-the-golden-rule-poster/> Accompanying text states, ‘26 variations of the ‘Golden Rule’ – that one should treat others as one would like others to treat oneself. Humanists believe that the “Golden Rule” is

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so widespread because it based on our common humanity – we all want to be treated well and we all need to live harmoniously with others. It is a widely shared and useful principle that can be worked out by anyone, anywhere, in any culture or era, using experience and empathy. It does not need to be given to us by a deity.’

‘In the fourth chapter of *The Descent of Man* Darwin accumulated examples of co-operative behaviour among social animals, and remarked very reasonably, ‘It can hardly be disputed that the social feelings are instinctive or innate in the lower animals; and why should they not be so in man?’ He concluded the chapter with what may be regarded as the classical statement of the humanist view on the social basis of morals: ‘The social instincts – the prime principle of man’s moral constitution – with the aid of active intellectual powers and the effects of habit, naturally lead to the golden rule, “As ye would that men should do to you, do ye to them likewise”; and this lies at the foundation of morality.’ – Margaret Knight, *Honest to Man* (London: Pemberton, 1974), p. 19

<sup>xii</sup> ‘...nothing is exempt from human question. This means that there is no immemorial tradition, no revelation, no authority, no privileged knowledge (first principles, intuitions, axioms) which is beyond question because beyond experience and which can be used as a standard by which to interpret experience. There is only experience to be interpreted in the light of further experience, the sole source of all standards of reason and value, for ever open to question. This radical assumption is itself, of course, open to question, and stands only in so far as it is upheld by experience.’ – H. J. Blackham, in id. (ed.), *Objections to Humanism* (London: Penguin, 1965), p. 11

<sup>xiii</sup> Herrick, *Humanism: An Introduction* (2009), chapter 2 (The Humanist Tradition) provides a good overview.

Knight (ed.), *The Humanist Anthology* (1961) quotes directly from the relevant sources, spanning from Confucius through to David Attenborough

<sup>xiv</sup> For the beginnings of rationalism and a naturalistic view of the world, see e.g. *Early Greek Philosophy*, edited with an Introduction by Jonathan Barnes (Penguin Classics 1987). For ancient atomism and Epicureanism, see e.g. *The Epicurean Philosophers*, edited with an Introduction by John Gaskin (Everyman, Dent, 1995)

<sup>xv</sup> The classic text on the significance of the Italian Renaissance is Jacob Burkhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (Penguin Classics, 1990, first published 1860)

<sup>xvi</sup> A classic view of the relation between science and religion from a humanist perspective is Bertrand Russell, *Religion and Science* (first published 1935, republished by Oxford University Press 1997 with a useful Introduction by Michael Ruse)

<sup>xvii</sup> A. N. Wilson, *God’s Funeral: The Decline of Faith in Western Civilization* (London: John Murray (Publishers) Ltd, 1999). For Hume, see his *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, usefully collected with other relevant texts in *Hume on Religion*, edited by Julian Baggini (The Philosophy Press, 2010)

<sup>xviii</sup> Wilson, *God’s Funeral* chapters 9 and 12. A nuanced account of the impact of Darwin from a humanist perspective is Philip Kitcher, *Living with Darwin* (Oxford University Press, 2007). Matthew Arnold’s famous poem *Dover Beach* is much anthologised

<sup>xix</sup> Simon Blackburn, *Ethics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). Classic texts by John Stuart Mill are *Utilitarianism* and *On Liberty* (e.g. in Mary Warnock, ed., *Utilitarianism*, Fontana 1985). For Mary Wollstonecraft, see *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (Oxford World’s Classics 2008, originally published 1792 and 1790)

<sup>xx</sup> The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/> (also included in Simon Blackburn, *Ethics*, op. cit.).

The Amsterdam Declaration: <http://iheu.org/humanism/the-amsterdam-declaration/>

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<sup>xxi</sup> 'I think it is morally incumbent upon humanists to do everything in their power to bring about the material and social conditions in which the great majority of people will have a fair opportunity of finding satisfaction in their lives, and I think that, so far as possible, their concern should extend beyond the national or professional groups of which they happen to be members, to mankind as a whole.' – Ayer, 'Introduction', in id. (ed.), *The Humanist Outlook*, p. 8

'Faith without works is not Christianity, and unbelief without any effort to help shoulder the consequences for mankind is not humanism.' – Blackham, *Objections to Humanism* (1965), p. 26

<sup>xxii</sup> BHA webpage on humanist pastoral support: <https://humanism.org.uk/community/humanist-pastoral-support/>

<sup>xxiii</sup> BHA webpage on becoming a humanist celebrant: <https://humanism.org.uk/ceremonies/training-to-be-a-humanist-celebrant/>

<sup>xxiv</sup> '...nothing is exempt from human question. This means that there is no immemorial tradition, no revelation, no authority, no privileged knowledge (first principles, intuitions, axioms) which is beyond question because beyond experience and which can be used as a standard by which to interpret experience. There is only experience to be interpreted in the light of further experience, the sole source of all standards of reason and value, for ever open to question. This radical assumption is itself, of course, open to question, and stands only in so far as it is upheld by experience.' – Blackham, *Objections to Humanism* (1965), p. 11

<sup>xxv</sup> Alom Shaha, 'Christmas should be for everyone, atheists included', *The Guardian*, 24 December 2010: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2010/dec/24/christmas-atheist-celebration>

<sup>xxvi</sup> 'I find a lot of things around the sense of the sacred in me. Works of art or music, sublime grand spectacles in nature, the starry heavens above and the moral law within, the oldest human skulls in Kenya or the newest human baby in a maternity ward can all be fitting objects of different kinds of awe and reverence. They can all take us outside ourselves.' – Simon Blackburn, 'Salvaging the Sacred', in Rogers (ed.), *Is Nothing Sacred?* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), pp. 129–130

<sup>xxvii</sup> BHA webpage on humanist ceremonies: <https://humanism.org.uk/ceremonies/>

*A humanist perspective on... celebrations and ceremonies* from Humanism for Schools: <http://humanismforschools.org.uk/pdfs/celebrations%20and%20ceremonies.pdf>

<sup>xxviii</sup> The BHA: <https://humanism.org.uk/about/>

IHEU: <http://iheu.org/about/about-iheu/>

<sup>xxix</sup> 'Human nature is not a machine to be built after a model, and set to do exactly the work prescribed for it, but a tree, which requires to grow and develop itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing ... It is not by wearing down into uniformity all that is individual in themselves, but by cultivating it, and calling it forth, within the limits imposed by the rights and interests of others, that human beings become a noble and beautiful object of contemplation; and as the works partake the character of those who do them, by the same process human life also becomes rich, diversified, and animating, furnishing more abundant aliment to high thoughts and elevating feelings ... In proportion to the development of his individuality, each person becomes more valuable to himself, and is therefore capable of being more valuable to others. There is a greater fullness of life about his own existence, and when there is more life in the units there is more in the mass which is composed of them.' – J. S. Mill, *On Liberty* (London: Longman, 1859), p. 81

'When I say that pleasure is the goal of living I do not mean the pleasures of libertines ... I mean, on the contrary, the pleasure that consists of freedom from bodily pain and mental agitation. Pleasant life is not the product of one drinking party after another or sexual intercourse with women and young men or of the seafood and other delicacies afforded by the serious table. On the contrary, it is the result of sober thinking...'

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– Epicurus, ‘Letter to Menoeceus’, in *The Art of Happiness*, trans. George K. Strodach (New York: Penguin, 2012), p. 159.

‘each one of us has to decide what ends he thinks it right to pursue and what principles he is prepared to stand by ... there is no escaping this responsibility. Even those who surrender their independence of judgement, or those who merely go by current fashion, are tacitly making a fundamental moral choice.’ – Ayer, ‘Introduction’, in id. (ed.), *The Humanist Outlook*, p. 7

<sup>xxx</sup> BHA webpage on secularism: <https://humanism.org.uk/campaigns/secularism/>

<sup>xxxii</sup> *The Oxford Declaration on Freedom of Thought and Expression*, IHEU, 2014: <http://iheu.org/oxford-declaration-on-freedom-of-thought-and-expression/>

<sup>xxxiii</sup> ‘Achieving one’s full potential in skills, abilities, moral development and psychological wellbeing is to become a ‘whole person’. Finding ways to encourage this fullness of being is an important part of the humanist agenda.’ – Jeaneane Fowler, *Humanism: Beliefs and Practices* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1999), p. 178

‘Of all the things that wisdom provides for the happiness of the whole person, by far the most important is the acquisition of friendship.’ – Epicurus, ‘Leading Doctrines’ in *The Art of Happiness*, trans. Strodach, p. 177

‘Only connect!’ – E. M. Forster, *Howards End* (London: Edward Arnold, 1910)

‘Remember your humanity, and forget the rest!’ – from the Russell–Einstein Manifesto, issued in London on 9 July 1955

‘there are objects and occasions which invoke in me a profound sense of the sacred, and I can cite other humanist scientists of whom this is also true ... Why, when you go to the Grand Canyon and you see the strata of geological time laid out before you, why again is there a feeling that brings you close to tears? Or looking at images from the Hubble telescope. I think it’s no different from the feeling of being moved to tears by music, by a Schubert quartet, say, or by poetry. The human mind is big enough, and imaginative enough, to be poetically moved by the whole sweep of geological ages represented by the rocks that you are standing among. That’s why you feel in awe.’ – Richard Dawkins, ‘The Sacred and the Scientist’, in Rogers (ed.), *Is Nothing Sacred?*, pp. 135–137

‘It is a positive view of humanity even if, at times, it is idealist. You are what you make of yourselves. Aim high, aim for the stars, and you may yet clear the rooftops. You will need courage, tenacity, motivation and a good sense of humour on the route. Quality of character, happiness, fulfilment of potential and of human needs can be improved through changed values, through redirection of individual life, by a process of personal change, and personal evolution.’ – Fowler, *Humanism*, p. 60

‘Humanism covers my main belief ... my belief in the individual, and in his duty to create, and to understand and to contact other individuals. A duty that may be and ought to be a delight. The human race, to which he belongs, may not survive, but that should not deter him ... wherever our race comes from, Wherever it is going to, whatever his own fissures and weaknesses, he himself is here, is now, he must understand, create, contact.’ – E. M. Forster quoted in Knight (ed.), *The Humanist Anthology* (1961), p. 154

<sup>xxxiiii</sup> BHA webpage on the ‘Happy Human’ symbol: <https://humanism.org.uk/humanism/the-happy-human-symbol/>

<sup>xxxv</sup> ‘[A] historically recent consequence of the growth and spread of a humanist morality... is the extension of our sympathies not just to other people but to some other animals. The same progressive outward extension of our moral boundaries which allows us to embrace not just our tribe but all people has allowed us to feel kinship with animals that seem to suffer or feel joy as we do. Some may see it as ironic that an approach whose very name foregrounds the ‘human’ should have precipitated an unprecedented concern for non-human animals but nonetheless it is so. Humanist views of what is moral prioritize welfare and suffering as a result of cultivating our empathy; it is only because we can see that in other animals that we are able to

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consider them in moral terms... Jeremy Bentham is a good example of a humanist whose sympathies for other animals were counter-cultural in a society informed by religious ideas of human exceptionalism.’ – Andrew Copson, from a chapter called ‘What is Humanism?’ in the upcoming *The Humanist Handbook* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2015)

<sup>xxxv</sup> For example the paintings of the Dutch realists, the sculpture of classical Athens, the music of Delius, Britten, Tippett, or Brahms.

‘[Art obliges us] to grasp human experience in the fullest sense *historically*: as a particular, concrete experience, situated in a particular space at a particular point in time. It invites us to understand ‘being human’ not as a fixed and immutable condition, but as a changing and changeable process – a matter not of being but of becoming ... At its most potent, moreover, art can change your hearts and minds in ways that help to accelerate the process of change. It can do this by exposing the gulf that yawns between what human beings are currently like and what they are capable of becoming.’ – Kiernan Ryan, ‘*Homo Aestheticus*’, in Gilland (ed.), *What Is It To Be Human?*, p. 33