

INTERIM BOARD OF STUDIES NEWSLETTER



Dear colleagues, we are pleased to share highlights from an initiative that began in Autumn 2023, from a proposal of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, to create a Board to review and enhance the formation of those teaching in Catholic schools.

This proposal was jointly accepted by the Bishops' Conferences of Scotland and Ireland. The Board was tasked with with:

- Exploring greater collaboration and alignment across existing RE certification provision for teachers;
- Developing future frameworks that address the evolving needs of Catholic educators;
- Recommending professional pathways, course content, delivery models, and governance structures;
- Ensuring a smooth transition from current certification systems.

The Board's latest report to the Bishops' Conferences (February 2025), outlined exciting proposals for the future of Religious Education (RE) certification for teachers and career-long learning across Catholic schools in Ireland, Scotland, and England & Wales. The key points of this report, and the ways that you can become involved are outlined, right.

WHAT'S NEW?

Key recommendations

1. A Unified Certificate for Teaching RE

A consistent certificate for teaching Religious Education, endorsed by the three Bishops' Conferences, is proposed to replace varied existing qualifications.

2. Career-Long Learning Framework

A three-part framework to support Catholic educators at every stage:

- Introduction to Catholic Education
- Religious Education Certificate
- Leadership in Catholic Education

3. Collaboration with Current Providers

Working closely with current RE certificate providers to develop model content and flexible delivery approaches.

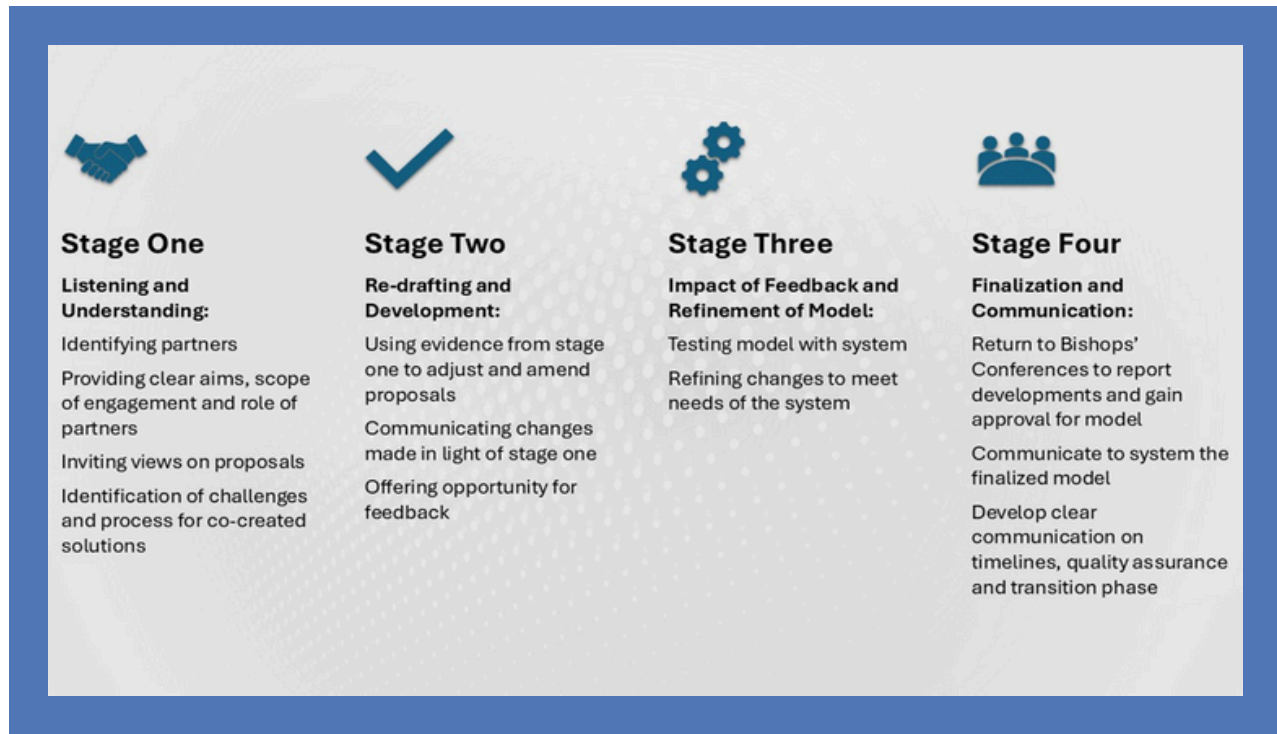
4. A Continuing Support Structure

Continuing cross-jurisdictional support for the implementation and ongoing development of this work.

TIMELINE AND IMPLEMENTATION

Provider and Partner Engagement Process

The Board aims to work with current providers and partners in the development of indicative content and delivery models. In order to do this, the following engagement process is proposed:



Teachers must remember that it depends chiefly on them whether the Catholic school achieves its purpose. They should therefore be properly prepared for their work, having the appropriate qualifications and adequate learning both religious and secular."

The Declaration on Christian Education # 8, Second Vatican Council

WHAT WILL THE CERTIFICATE COVER?

It is proposed that the courses will provide

- Foundational Catholic theological knowledge
- RE curriculum (specific to each jurisdiction)
- Pedagogical skills
- Integration of theology and practice

The suggested fields of study include:

- Catholic Education and the Vocation to teach
- Catholic Anthropological and Philosophical Dialogue
- The Word of God
- The Creed - We believe in One God
- Celebrating Church and Sacraments
- Christian Morality- Living as Jesus Did
- Prayer and Worship

WHY THIS MATTERS

This initiative:

- Supports a clear, faith-rooted progression for Catholic educators
- Recognises diverse career pathways in Catholic education
- Offers flexible, modular learning opportunities
- Ensures quality and consistency across the Catholic school system in each of the three jurisdictions



Interview with the Chair of the Board of Studies *Ros Stuart-Buttle*

Why has the work on the CCRS, CRE & CTC been undertaken?

Well, the work is being undertaken for a range of reasons. Firstly, in response to an invitation from +Marcus Stock to review and follow up on the research recommendations from my 2019 research report into the CCRS in England & Wales. Also, from a growing desire from the three Episcopal Conferences (Ireland, Scotland, England & Wales) to go beyond just recognising each other's separate qualifications (CCRS, CTC or CRE) but to work together more closely to establish new common or shared provision of professional development for those working in Catholic schools.

We all recognise the changing educational and faith landscapes which we are all working in, which leaves questions about how best to form teachers in a theological and pedagogical literacy that is relevant for today. Our work as an Interim Board is a response to this and we are excited about what emerges.

Who has been involved in the conversation so far?

The Interim Board of Studies was set up in January/February 2024 with a primary aim to focus on the provision (certificate award) for those teaching religious education in Catholic schools. It is made up of post holders nominated

by each of the three Bishops' Conferences. So for Scotland, it's Barbara Coupar, Director of Scottish Catholic Education Service, and Margaret Barton, the RE Secondary Adviser in the Archdiocese of St Andrews & Edinburgh. For Ireland, it's Alan Hynes, Director of Catholic Education Partnership and Fr. Eddie McGee, the Catechetical Adviser for Irish Bishops Conference. The office of National Director of Catechesis has also been represented. For England & Wales, Paul Barber and Catherine Bryan, the Director and Deputy Director of the CES, respectively, plus Mo Glackin, the National Adviser for Religious Education.

What's your role?

I am the chair of the Interim Board and I am not employed by any of the three Conferences! But I do have a long-standing background in adult theological formation and teacher professional development.

And what's been the process so far?

We've had a number of online meetings, and one in-person, and have been sharing regular updates to the three Episcopal Conferences. We have also sent two formal reports to the respective Conferences over the past twelve months, which have been very well received. So the Bishops have been involved too. With the consent of the Bishops, we hope that existing course providers and maybe some new partners will engage with us, as we bring forward ideas in terms of indicative curriculum,

possible delivery models, and quality assurance and oversight arrangements for any new award. Also, as the Interim Board has the support of the three Bishops' Conferences, I think it will be a real benefit to share what we have been doing with providers and other interested partners and start to make it a reality.

What benefits do you foresee for any new, shared qualification across the jurisdictions?

Certainly, a consistent and shared approach across all three Conferences to some sort of provision or award to prepare teachers for teaching Religious Education is a benefit. At the moment, across the three Conferences there are different courses, different levels, different awards, different providers etc. Of course, the Religious Education curriculum is unique to each Conference and this will be respected and included in any new provision. But at the same time, greater commonality about what we do and how we do it will bring clarity and transparency to what we offer in terms of professional development to our teachers. It also allows for 'portability' of the qualification for teachers who may move between the jurisdictions as part of their career progression. We also hope that this could lead in the future to a wider framework of provision, recognised and awarded by the three Bishops' Conferences, that supports career-long professional development within the Catholic school sector i.e. from those just starting out through to middle leadership, headship etc.

Are there any drawbacks?

Well, change can be difficult for us all, as people and institutions, and we acknowledge this. Of course, there will be a period of transition but we are reminded of the words of St John Henry Newman – ‘to live is to change’. And we live in changing times! Existing course providers might be concerned and ask what does this new provision mean for me? What arrangements or changes might be needed? What is the timescale? What does it mean in terms of resources – human, financial? We hope that these won’t be drawbacks but rather opportunities.

How can people get involved?

This newsletter is the start! We want to hear your thoughts, initial feedback and questions. Following this, there will be opportunities over the coming weeks and months to hear more and get involved both through further communication from the Interim Board, including local engagement with each Conference’s partners, perhaps looking at such things as indicative curriculum models or delivery options for the new provision. This will be scheduled collaboratively across the jurisdictions, so more on this to follow!

NEXT STEPS

This approach has already been approved by the three Bishops’ Conferences. It is intended that this new certification pathway will commence in September 2026.

In order to fully engage with a wide range of partners, the Interim Board will be inviting partners to contribute in a number of ways including:

- Respond to the newsletter via this link: <https://forms.gle/Jq7L2HTkjCBJvV9m8>
- Follow-up introductory webinar on Tuesday 15 July at 10-11 am. To register for this event please email Rebekah Heyward at: ccrs@catholiceducation.org.uk
- Further planned engagement events and activities with current providers and partners
- Various platforms to offer feedback
- Updates on how submissions and feedback have influenced the process

Using existing networks to ensure that good communication and updates about progress are shared across the jurisdictions regularly and that partners are aware of updates and progress.

We look forward to working together as we shape the future of Catholic Religious Education.