

July 2026

## RS MATTERS

**Welcome RSTAAANZ members.**

The following are offerings from the exec and wider membership relevant to our RS mahi.

### **2026 RSTAAANZ webinars are live!**



The 2026 season of RSTAAANZ webinars are live with the Executive Member for Scholarship Lisa Jenkins beginning the series with a presentation on how to start a Scholarship RS class but continued with useful planning and resources on the 2026 Scholarship RS theme of War in Religious Traditions. Then we have had the pleasure of listening to John Chote and his presentation on school and student participation in Religious Studies. These presentations can be viewed here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Z70mvzADARjMaU6yXW1CGRhCLLNezhQl/view>

### **NEX:Network of Expertise**

The NEX funding has been taken up by over 40 different secondary subject associations. Some of these subjects have been using NEX funding for 3 years now. This is our first year, and we are getting to grips with what we can realistically achieve.

Thank you to those of you who logged on to one of the 3 webinars on the draft Religious Studies curriculum recently. They were run successfully with a good representation of teachers from across the schools that have a religious identity. We will be getting in touch with state school users as a follow up to these.

A general questionnaire will be circulated to all RSTAAANZ members, but we will also try and contact RS teachers who are not RSTAAANZ members as well. Look out for this next term. The questionnaire is designed to find out in more detail what is being taught in RS and what specific support people need.

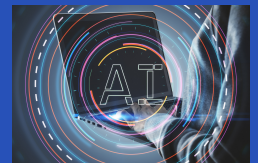
One of the apparent blows to RS teaching is that in the new curriculum only a full subject can be taken, not individual topics within it. There are quite a few schools, both state and integrated, who take one standard in the current NCEA offerings. This is still worthwhile and a blow to those schools who might use the one subject/standard to complement their whole programme.

Karawhiua

John Chote

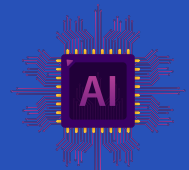


### **RS & AI**



In a future newsletter we wish to showcase your experiences with AI. How is your Faculty managing AI and assessment?

**Please send your thoughts, ideas, experiences to:**  
[ljenkins@baradene.school.nz](mailto:ljenkins@baradene.school.nz)



## Update on the Curriculum Refresh: Discussion, review and correspondence.

On the 15th of June, on behalf of the RSTAANZ exec. (and yourselves), I sent a letter to Dr Catherine Law and the CACP Refresh team summarising the results of our local survey and some korero in the on-line discussions. The following are some main points from that letter:

“Our respondents included Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, state-integrated, and independent schools from across the country. Overall, the sector response to the draft curriculum is strongly positive.

### Overall endorsement

A clear majority of schools report that:

- the content of the draft curriculum fits well with their school and community context
- the material is appropriate for their students
- teachers feel confident they could teach the proposed curriculum
- the strengthened structure and sequencing will lift the status of Religious Studies nationally.



Several schools commented that the progression from Year 11 to Year 13 is logical and achievable, with good coherence across beliefs, narratives, history, and ethics. Others noted that the curriculum aligns well with existing Catholic special character programmes and provides a formal place for Religious Studies within the New Zealand Curriculum.

While there is some concern about moving from the flexibility and choice of the current NCEA approach, there is also strong support for the increased academic rigour and the possibility of external assessment, which many see as giving Religious Studies greater credibility and transparency alongside other senior subjects.

### Key affirmations

Across the responses, the following themes were consistently affirmed:

- **Coherence and progression:** Teachers value the clear pathway from Year 11–13 and the way disciplinary knowledge builds over time.
- **Academic credibility:** Externals and disciplinary writing are seen as strengthening RS as a serious academic subject.
- **Alignment with special character and diversity:** Catholic schools (who currently make up 96% of those schools who offer 3 or more standards at levels 1, 2 & 3) in particular note good synergy with *Tō Tātau Whakapono* (the established NZ RE programme for Catholic schools) while also appreciating the inclusion of multiple world religions and appropriate options for choice.
- **National consistency:** Schools welcome the fact that all students will engage with the same core topics, improving equity and comparability.

### Common concerns

The concerns raised are largely practical and relate to losses through change from standards, and implementation, rather than to the curriculum’s intent or structure. The most frequent points were:

- **Assessment clarity:** Many respondents asked for more detail on assessment formats, exemplars, and the balance of internal and external assessment before committing to detailed planning.
- **Timing and workload:** Teachers expressed anxiety about the timing of release, the need for resources, and the risk of late changes, given recent experiences with other curriculum and qualification roll-outs.

- **Breadth and depth:** Some schools are concerned about the content load, particularly where Religious Studies has limited timetable allocation.
- **Representation:** Several schools requested greater inclusion so that students can better see themselves reflected in the curriculum.”

We also commented that not all members were in agreement and some wished for re-ordering of content, such as Prophets and Epistles, and more inclusion of systematic theology and apologetics. However, we finished with the following: “The concerns raised are primarily about assessment detail, timing, and resourcing, and do not amount to opposition to the curriculum itself. The sector is ready to move forward, and we look forward to continued collaboration with the Ministry to ensure that assessment guidance and implementation timelines are communicated clearly and in good time.”

## Meet a Member:



My name is Andrea Craig, and I have been a member of the RSTAA NZ executive team since 2019. I was born and raised in Invercargill and have lived in Christchurch since 2004. For the past 20 years, I have worked in Catholic schools, teaching a range of subjects including Religious Education, English, Art History, Media Studies, and Health. For the past 11 years I was Head of the Religious Education Faculty and Principal's Nominee at Villa Maria College. At the beginning of Term 2 this year, I took on a new role with the Christchurch Catholic Education Office as the Religious Education Adviser – Secondary Lead. In this position, I support Catholic schools with a specific interest in curriculum and assessment design, and teach courses for Te Kupenga – Catholic Theological College. Outside of work, I enjoy reading, attending concerts, and spending time with my family.



## Sancta Maria College, Auckland's Scholarship journey.

At Sancta Maria College we have been offering Scholarship Religious studies since its inception.

Our students have enjoyed the challenge of being able to prepare for the external examination at the end of the year. They also enjoy the fact of having their academic abilities assessed by an external assessor and to find out how they measure up nationally.

For many it has been a journey of learning something completely new as the context changes every year and this may not be something they would have covered in their mainstream Religious Education curriculum.

Some of our students take on Scholarship Religious Studies at Year 12. Student voice has said they do this as it is an opportunity to have a taster of what Scholarship is all about before the demands of NCEA Level 3. They find Scholarship Religious Studies is more accessible to them at Year 12, as other Scholarship subjects require content knowledge from NCEA Level 3. Some of the feedback our students have given is that Scholarship Religious Studies has helped them to stretch their thinking skills. This has had the added benefit of being able to apply these skills across other subject areas and given some of our students the confidence to take on multiple Scholarship subjects at Year 13.

Overall, the impression is that Scholarship Religious Studies has been a valuable addition to the curriculum.

**Daniel Bidwell. Teacher in charge of Scholarship RS.**

