

RS Matters

May 14th 2024

Greetings RSTAANZ members,

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

New Members

41 schools or associated educational organisations have signed up to RSTAANZ in April/May. This represents around 200 individuals within Muslim, Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian, 7th Day Adventist, and other states schools. Thank you for choosing to be part of the emerging association, especially in these challenging times for RS in Aotearoa.

A reminder to those individuals who signed the registration form for your school, please circulate the RSTAANZ [Google Form](#) link to the relevant members of your staff so we can gather individual contact details.



RS and the RAS

(Colin MacLeod)

As members know, the Review of Achievement Standards (RAS) has been placed in hiatus by the Minister for Education Erica Stanford. You may not be aware that three members of the current RSTAANZ exec, John Chote, Lisa Jenkins and Colin MacLeod were significantly involved in the drafting process thus far, including some positive progress with Level 2. The previous chair of RSTAANZ, Andrew Murray, was also involved in the first two years of the RAS prior to moving to another leadership role. And, while not exactly 'happy' with the final results, the impact of these people on the Ministry of Education writing process was considerable. Having had 5 different MoE 'leads' for the RS RAS, only the last of which had any experience with teaching RS, a huge amount of dialogue needed to take place to bring people up to speed with our particular RS terms, understandings and experience – RS is MORE than a social science and must be recognised as such!

Like all other subject associations we are not exactly sure what will happen next, but we intend to be as actively involved in the process as possible, whatever that might be – as we've done in the past. (E.g. Scholarship RS only exists because of the mahi of the RSTAANZ Exec. And we were told it would never happen.) Our chairperson, Colin MacLeod, participated in the PPTA Subject Associations Form in the first week of the term 1 school holidays and was not surprised to discover that general frustration was rife. While most subjects were very happy that a 'pause' had been established with NCEA levels 2 and 3, and that a focus was being placed on curriculum, most were less than confident that subject expertise would be permitted to drive curriculum development. With Erica Stanford's [ministerial advisory group](#) being her primary source for guidance, subject associations were encouraged to be patient and proactive in getting their voices heard.

Sharing such a voice for RS, especially with our unique context - Beliefs and practices being deeply personal and diverse; and, some schools having a fully developed RE curriculum, and others desperately seeking one – we are very keen to establish and share our collective RS knowledge and experience.



PPTA Subject Associations Forum – Wellington – Apr. 15-16



Upcoming Exec. Elections

We're seeking nominations to join the Exec. as per our [constitution](#). **The closing date for nominations is May 31st 2024.** On-line voting will take place in late June/July.

N.B. Nominees must be a financial member of RSTAANZ to be nominated

If you wish to nominate yourself, or someone else, please, e-mail rstaanz@gmail.com:

- The **name of the person** being nominated. (If someone else, check that he/she is willing to be nominated.)
- The **name of the school** or organisation to which they/you belong.
- The school's **physical address**.
- Their/your **role** in terms of Religious Studies (Eg. Head of Faculty, DRS, Chaplain, etc)
- Their/your **e-mail address**
- Their/your **contact phone number** .
- **And, no more than 150 words** indicating what they/you bring, and why becoming a member of the RSTAANZ exec is personally important.

Nominee information will be circulated to members prior to voting, and will be included on the voting form.



RS on the Aotearoa Education Landscape

(John Chote)

Religious Studies, with a full NCEA Level 1, 2 and 3 assessment package of four 6-credit internal standards per level, was added late to the NCEA roll out in 2009. Unlike other subjects it did not have a set curriculum to go with the assessment! In fact RS did not appear in the NZ Curriculum, that is, not until the updated list of Social Science subjects was published in 2021, where RS is now listed as one of 10 Social Science subjects. But it still does not have a set curriculum at this stage! That is where RSTAANZ can help through its Facebook page by providing links to relevant material.

But we are creative educators in Aotearoa New Zealand and teachers from both state and faith schools have used the RS assessment standards well using existing curricula, like the Bishops' Curriculum in Catholic Schools, or creating courses in state schools. [State schools](#) have used the RS standards as part of history, philosophy, social science, English and Maori since they were introduced. Some state schools run "understanding religion" as a Year 13 option, with good uptake. And while Catholic Colleges consistently make up close to 90 per cent of the NCEA RS entries by standards entered, the standards are broad enough to cater for a wide range of contexts. Our job at RSTAANZ is to represent all these contexts as we promote this [very popular subject](#). In fact, with over 4000 students entered in full Level 3 RS courses most years, it has meant that RS was also added to the list of Scholarship subjects from 2020. This application was largely the work of current RSTAANZ members.

RS – Scholarship Clash Be-gone

(Lisa Jenkins)

Since the introduction of Scholarship RS there has been an examination clash with Level 2 English. This prevented many students in Year 12 from sitting Scholarship RE or jeopardised the success of students who chose to do both examinations.

In recent years, individual teachers and Colleges expressed to RSTAANZ the need for subject association support in requesting to NZQA that this clash be considered as an equity issue and that both subjects have their own space on the assessment calendar.

At the start of 2024, Scholarship RS has been provided with the space to grow and for students who are passionate about sitting the examination to do so without restrictions. It is pleasing to know that NZQA have taken the feedback onboard and with thanks to the examination committee at NZQA Scholarship RS can be sat on Monday 25th November without restrictions.

That's it from us for now. Best wishes for the term ahead. We'll be in touch soon regarding the elections. Keep in touch via the facebook page – it's your space ([link below](#)).

Ngā mihi nui, *Colin MacLeod*