

GCSE Religious Studies and the English Baccalaureate:

A level playing field for RE? Interpreting the GCSE Humanities data



Introduction:

All GCSEs in Religious Studies are required to meet the subject criteria.

The aims and learning outcomes of the current criteria are as follows:

GCSE specifications in religious studies must enable learners to:

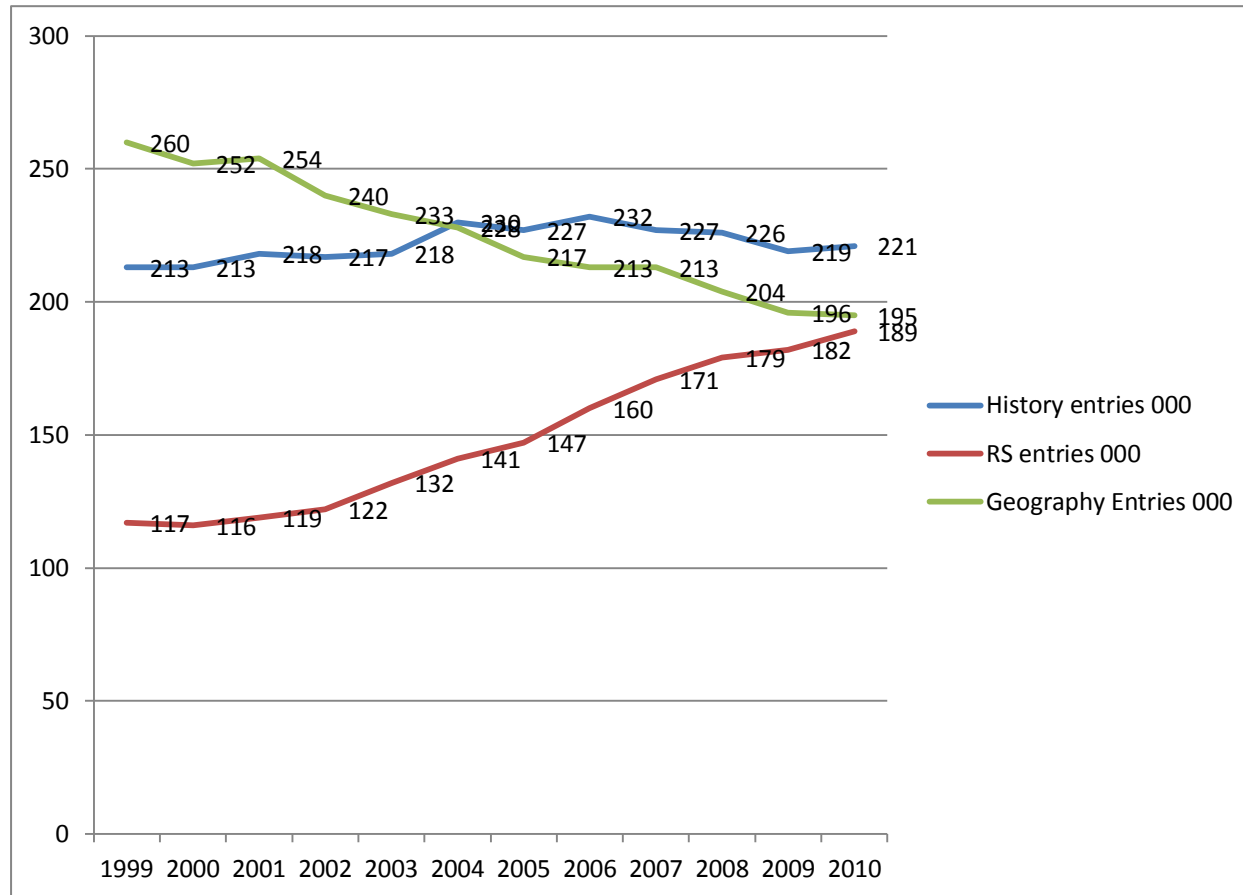
- adopt an enquiring, critical and reflective approach to the study of religion
- explore religions and beliefs, reflect on fundamental questions, engage with them intellectually and respond personally
- enhance their spiritual and moral development, and contribute to their health and wellbeing
- enhance their personal, social and cultural development, their understanding of different cultures locally, nationally and in the wider world, and to contribute to social and community cohesion
- develop their interest in and enthusiasm for the study of religion, and relate it to the wider world
- reflect on and develop their own values, opinions and attitudes in light of their learning

GCSE qualification criteria require awarding bodies to apply the following regulation: “for short course specifications, include **half of the content** of a single award GCSE and cover the full range of grades”

A short course in Religious Studies is designed to be studied over **approximately 70 hours** whereas a full course is designed to be studied over **approximately 140 hours**.

GCSE Full Course Entries 1999-2010 All UK Candidates – Source www.jcq.org.uk

The graph below shows that over the last 10 years, GCSE Full Course RS has become more popular, History entries are relatively stable, whilst Geography numbers are falling. **There are still more entries for History and Geography than for RS**

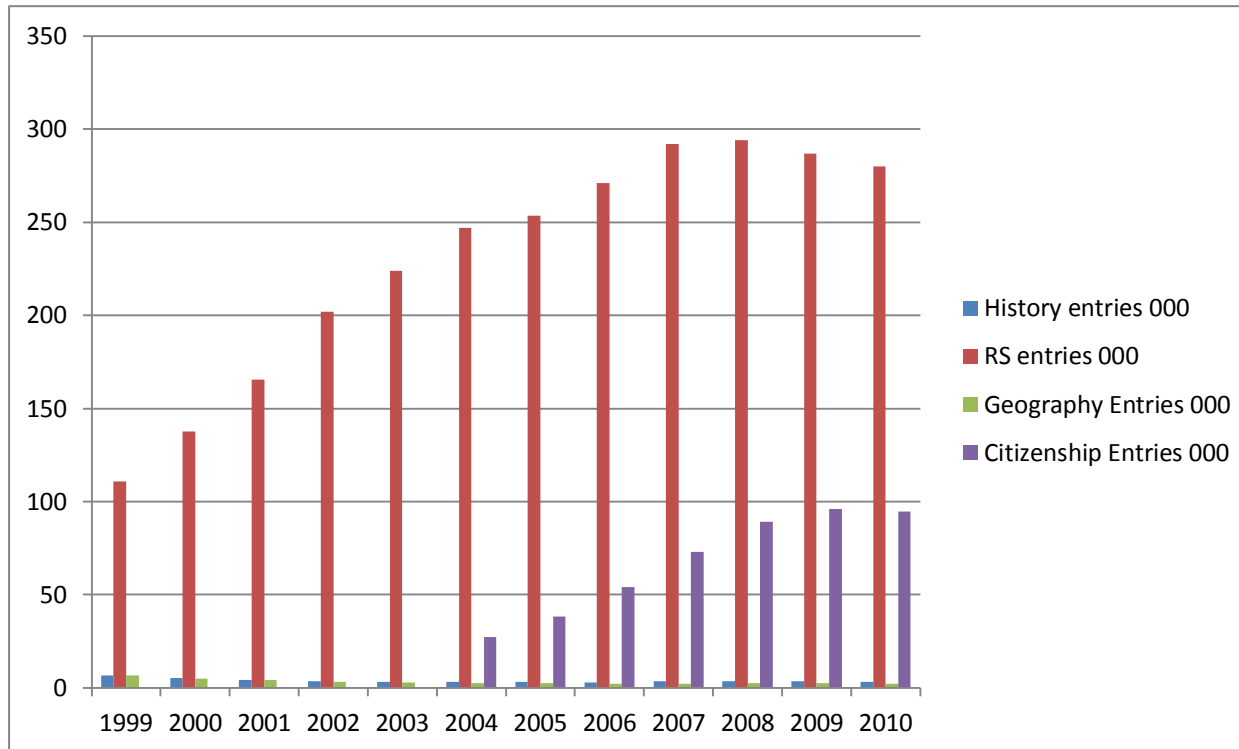


	History entries 000	RS entries 000	Geography Entries 000
1999	213	117	260
2000	213	116	252
2001	218	119	254
2002	217	122	240
2003	218	132	233
2004	230	141	228
2005	227	147	217
2006	232	160	213
2007	227	171	213
2008	226	179	204
2009	219	182	196
2010	221	189	195

Full courses in RS are designed to be studied for approximately 140 hours over two years in Key Stage 4. In most schools this would be offered as an **option** at GCSE. They are the best foundation for 'A' level Religious Studies and beyond, providing greater breadth of study and time to study the subject in more depth.

GCSE Short Course Entries 1999-2010 All UK Candidates –

Source www.jcq.org.uk



	History entries 000	RS entries 000	Geography Entries 000	Citizenship Entries 000
1999	6.7	110.7	6.5	
2000	5.2	137.6	5.1	
2001	4.4	165.5	4.4	
2002	3.5	201.9	3.3	
2003	3.3	223.9	2.9	
2004	3.3	246.9	2.7	27.2
2005	3.3	253.4	2.4	38.2
2006	2.9	271	2.1	54.1
2007	3.6	292	2.3	73.1
2008	3.5	294	2.6	89.0
2009	3.5	286.9	2.5	96.2
2010	3.2	279.9	2.3	94.6

Designed for study for 70 hours over two years in Key Stage 4

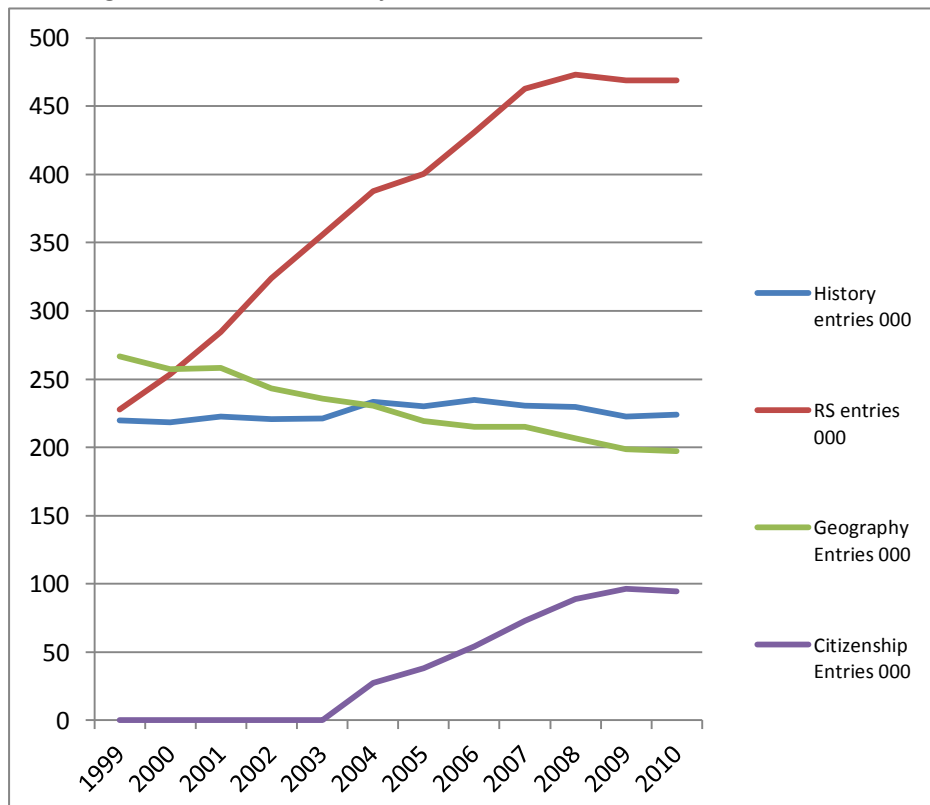
The short course is the **minimum entitlement set** out in the non-statutory National Framework for RE for the programme of study at Key Stage 4. The majority of Agreed Syllabuses in England have adopted this course as the model for the statutory provision for RE. The introduction of the GCSE Short Course in 1996 was very popular with schools who were finally able to give students formal accreditation for their statutory provision for RE. They are an important vehicle for ensuring that all students study RE at this pivotal period in their development and therefore leave school with a reasonable degree of religious knowledge, understanding and literacy.

Distorting the picture

If figures are quoted that combine SHORT COURSE entries and FULL COURSE entries, they grossly distort the picture of the provision for each subject in schools. As stated above, short courses are only studied for half the time, covering half the content and worth half a GCSE.

The graph on the left shows the false impression created by combining the entries for short course and full course. Compare this with the graph on the right showing the actual GCSE full course entries.

False impression created by conflating two different types of course; the short course and the full course. It appears that RS is the largest subject, dwarfing other Humanities subjects.



The reality; comparing like with like, showing that all three Humanities subjects are fairly evenly matched in the options system. History is the largest of the entries at full course and RS the smallest.

