



SACRE Officers and support

**Exploring the relationship between three pivotal functions in the support of a SACRE -
the Clerk,
the RE Professional
and the LA Officer**

Supporting the SACRE

The responsibilities of the Local Authority to its SACRE are:

- ensure there is a SACRE
- ensure all four groups are appropriately represented on the SACRE
- establish an occasional body called an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) and appoint members
- ensure there is an Agreed Syllabus, reviewed every five years
- ensure funds and support are in place to enable SACRE and the ASC to fulfil their duties
- take note of and respond to advice from the SACRE.

‘Sufficient funding’ for the SACRE may vary, but should not be less than:

- Clerking support for 3-6 SACRE meetings per year.
- Specialist RE advice and back-up support for 3-6 SACRE meetings per year
- Specialist RE advice and back-up support from the Clerk and LA Officer
- Support for any recommendations that may arise from these meetings
- Preparation, publication and distribution of minutes
- Ensuring an annual report is received by the DfE and key partners in the work of SACRE.

Most SACREs meet termly, although there are sometimes additional meetings when required.

Each SACRE is required to publish an annual report which has to be submitted to the Secretary of State and which should be widely circulated locally.

Supporting the ASC

Local Authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that the agreed syllabus is reviewed every five years. SACREs should require the local authority (LA) to convene an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC), a parallel but different body to the SACRE that requires the same level of ‘support’ from the LA to perform its function. During the review period, the ASC needs to meet regularly to consider draft syllabus materials and make recommendations. The ASC should also be clerked by a dedicated and professional clerk. Its minutes are a legal document, available for scrutiny should the syllabus process subsequently be challenged, possibly in a court of law. The LA is responsible for providing satisfactory funding for this task, including writing, consulting, publishing and providing necessary training. The LA must provide a sufficient budget, so a close partnership between the LA Officer and the SACRE is necessary to enable the work to proceed effectively.

In addition, the SACRE has the power, rarely used, to require the LA to review its agreed syllabus earlier than within the five-year period as stated in the [Education Act 1996 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56).

‘Sufficient funding’ for the ASC within a five-year cycle may vary for reasons similar to those leading to variation in funding of SACREs in different LAs, but should not be less than:

- Clerking support for 3-6 ASC meetings in a year
- Specialist RE advice and back-up support for the 3-6 ASC meetings
- Specialist RE advice and back-up support for reviewing the agreed syllabus
- Preparing and publishing the new syllabus, disseminating it to LA schools.

Clerk to the SACRE and the ASC

Legislation underpinning the statutory work of SACREs requires that they should have the support of a clerk or similar officer, that minutes are produced in an efficient and legal manner, thereby ensuring the smooth and effective running of the SACRE; the LA has a responsibility to ensure that the minutes of SACREs and ASCs are publicly available for six years after their adoption.

Follow-up from meetings and liaising with various organisations and communities is time-consuming, requiring a level of professional competency. Both the SACRE and the ASC need to have a wide membership, representing the many and varied faith communities in the LA. The Clerk is often the first point of contact with these communities and SACRE members.

Responsibilities:

The SACRE and/or ASC Clerk should:

- Arrange, attend and clerk meetings of the SACRE / ASC
- Produce and circulate minutes and agendas of the SACRE / ASC in a timely manner
- Ensure that all papers are circulated to members in advance of meetings
- Advise on dates of meetings, particularly in relation to religious holidays or other Council meetings which may clash and affect quoracy
- Arrange venues for meetings of the SACRE / ASC
- Liaise with a venue for use of any necessary equipment (e.g. IT, projector) required
- Remind members / other attendees about reports for meetings / circulation deadlines
- Circulate additional papers from e.g. NASACRE, RE Council and Ofsted, as appropriate
- Work as a team closely with the Chair, RE Professional and other SACRE officers to produce reports, e.g. when changes to the SACRE constitution or membership are required
- Be the first point of contact for SACRE members, faith community members, members of the public and other bodies concerned with the work of SACREs
- Respond to queries, alerting the Chair and Adviser when necessary
- Maintain the SACRE membership list, keeping it up to date, chasing members whose attendance is poor and identifying any membership issues for the attention of the Chair, RE Professional and LA officers
- Contact nominating bodies represented on the SACRE when membership lapses to arrange for replacements and / or liaise with these bodies over other issues
- Contribute information, e.g. membership and attendance details for the Annual Report
- Assist in the production and circulation of the Annual Report; issue Welcome / Induction Packs for new members and ensure that they have sufficient information
- Where possible liaise with the LA Officer, other Council departments, keeping the Chair, the RE Professional and other officers informed of any relevant Council initiatives
- Ensure that all SACRE publications / advice are circulated to the relevant bodies
- Liaise with the Council's committee / legal section re. governance issues
- Be responsible for the passing on invoices for payment, relating to SACRE work, e.g. attendance at national conferences, catering for meetings.

RE Professional Adviser to the SACRE

In some LAs, this role is taken over by a consultant employed for this purpose.

It is important therefore that the RE Professional Adviser is able to work with the support of the Clerk and the LA Officer, at least one of whom should be able to make necessary links with council processes and departments to ensure effective communications with schools and cross-Council working.

Responsibilities:

The SACRE (SACRE* indicates ASC when appropriate) RE Adviser should:

- Attend all SACRE* meetings, helping to prepare agendas and key papers
- Advise SACRE* on issues relating to its work
- Ensure SACRE* is up to date with local, regional and national initiatives and issues related to RE, collective worship and syllabus developments, e.g. the work of the RE Council, the All Party Parliamentary Group for RE, DfE or charitable funded initiatives
- Relate SACRE's work to wider community issues, including partnerships with faith and belief communities
- Lead on areas related to the Agreed Syllabus, RE and collective worship
- Produce reports to meet the deadlines agreed for distribution of papers for meetings
- Support SACRE members' development, including their ability to provide a bridge between their nominating body and SACRE
- Manage and deliver the training of SACRE members and, where appropriate, teachers and other groups interested in RE
- With relevant administrative support / SACRE Clerk, manage and advise meetings of sub groups e.g. working parties for particular initiatives
- With the SACRE Clerk ensure that SACRE publications are circulated to relevant bodies
- Working with the Chair, the Clerk and other SACRE officers, produce reports to the Council e.g. when changes to the SACRE constitution or membership are required
- Draft and edit the SACRE Annual Report and all SACRE materials and publications
- With administrative support, update any relevant RE / ASC / SACRE website and SACRE's presence on the LA website
- Take the lead on the monitoring aspects of SACRE, especially agreed school visits and analysis of examination results in Religious Studies.

The Local Authority Officer to the SACRE

It is customary for SACREs to be attended by a senior Local Authority Officer who represents the Director of Children's Services, supports SACRE's effective communications with the LA and the smooth running of the work of the Clerk and RE Professional. Where either or both of these other functions are provided by an external consultant, this role is vital and pivotal as the LA Officer will need to establish the necessary links for SACRE with Council processes and departments to ensure effective communications with schools and cross-Council working.

The LA Officer will be able to provide SACRE with information regarding the local schools and the successes and difficulties they are experiencing, will understand and link SACRE to budget processes and Council initiatives which may influence or impact on their work, e.g. the Prevent Board or Community Safety Partnership.

Where the RE Professional is not a LA employee, the LA Officer will need to facilitate their link to other information about schools, examination data and other LA employees who can support links with schools, training processes and office backup.

When the LA is sending its budget for the coming year, the LA Officer should ensure that the needs of SACRE are recognised and that a sufficient budget is available so that SACRE can perform its statutory duties. When there is an Agreed Syllabus Conference, those additional needs will also have to be budgeted for.