Purpose

The purpose of this briefing note is to confirm that religious education courses which are not approved under Section 96 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 will not be eligible for LSC funding from 2007/08. This includes, for example courses accredited by the National Accrediting Board of Studies (NABS).

Intended Recipients

This briefing note is intended to be for the information of:
- headteachers of school sixth forms and principals of colleges that deliver religious education courses not on Section 96 in 2006/07; and
- LSC area partnership teams.

Background

For 16-18 year olds, the LSC has a duty to fund only qualifications that are accredited by the QCA and approved by the secretary of state under Section 96 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000. The LSC has, on an interim basis, funded NABS courses in the last few years on the understanding that the Catholic Education Service would develop new qualifications meeting the needs of students and the requirements set out above to receive LSC funding.

In 2006/07 the LSC stopped funding provision that was previously approved under Schedule 2 (a) and (b) of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 but was not approved under Section 96. Exceptionally, funding was agreed to continue to fund NABS courses for one further year while the eligibility was reviewed for 2007/08.

For 2007/08, the LSC has decided that it will not fund NABS courses delivered from 2007/08 onwards. This is in response to changes in the Government’s priorities for funding across the 14-19 education phase and pressure on the LSC to ensure providers deliver more qualifications listed on Section 96 and to reduce
funding for those that are not. This decision was also confirmed in February 2007 in a letter from Bill Rammell (Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education) to Archbishop Vincent Nichols, Chair of the Catholic Education Service.

Implications for Schools and Colleges

Neither schools or colleges will be able to claim funding for religious education courses delivered in 2007/08 which are not on Section 96. Funding will continue to be available for the delivery of qualifications that are listed under Section 96 and institutions delivering a NABS course in 2006/07 are encouraged to transfer to an approved alternative for 2007/08.

The 2007/08 Regional Allocations Framework provides LSC regions with a framework to assist in the agreement of provider funding allocations for the 2007/08 academic year. In 2007/08:

- school sixth form allocations are calculated on the basis of the qualifications recorded in their 2006 September Pupil Count, thus a school sixth form delivering a NABS course in 2006/07 will receive a funding allocation in 2007/08 based on a curriculum which includes NABS. However, the school must transfer to a qualification on Section 96 in 2007/08 and record it as such in data supplied to the DfES in order to maintain the level of allocation in 2008/09. Therefore as learners will be transferring to another qualification there should be no impact on allocations.

- An FE college delivering NABS in 2006/07 will have the funding included in its baseline for 2007/08 and discussions as to whether the college plan to transfer to a qualification on Section 96 for 2007/08 should inform the calculation of their final allocation. If an FE college transfers to such a qualification then there will be no impact on its funding allocation.

LSC Learning Aim Database

The LAD will be amended to make the following aim ineligible for new learners from 2007/08:

00230828 - Religious Studies

Funding Guidance

This policy will also be stated in the Funding Guidance for Further Education in 2007/08 as well as the Update to the School Sixth Forms Funding Guidance for 2006/07 and 2007/08.