

obvious increase in disaffection generally. It was also clear that it affected boys much more than girls. Students had generally started the GCSE course with enthusiasm but this waned somewhat as the year progressed and although many students picked up the pace again after the mock exams in Year 11 many, mostly boys, did not. We also identified the end of Year 9 as another time when the attitude of students changed. Like many other schools our internal exams for Year 9 were held in February - March, and, as there are no end of key stage SATs in the humanities subjects, many students, perhaps subconsciously, saw this as a time to ease off.

Although there is a lot of research into gender differential at GCSE and various people have approached the problem in various ways, one aspect seemed common. Boys generally respond well to short, "snappy" sections of study, with clearly identifiable short-term goals. The WJEC's GCSE Humanities syllabus provides part of this through its modular format but perhaps the length of the course, over two years, was diluting the effect. A colleague at the exam board, who taught in a school in Gloucestershire, had introduced GCSE Humanities as a one year course and had noticed a marked improvement in the gender differential. Although we would not be granted any extra time in the curriculum we decided to investigate the feasibility of completing the Humanities course by the summer of Year 10 and then giving students the option of studying either GCSE History or Geography as an additional subject in Year 11. The timing would be tight, particularly as the examination had shifted from its usual position at the end of June to the end of May in 2001, but using the summer term of Year 9 to start the course and teaching right up until exam day could do it. The single subject courses for Year 11 also had to dovetail with the WJEC Humanities course and allow students to use the content that they had already studied. After much discussion and studying of syllabi it was agreed to adopt SEG syllabus "B" for Geography, changing to AQA Syllabus "C" for 2003 and the WJEC syllabus for History. Senior management gave the go-ahead so we drew up plans and held our breath. The curriculum plan for the delivery of GCSE Humanities, by the end of Year 10, is as follows.

KS4 Humanities Curriculum Plan

Year 9	
Feb 2000	Year 9 school examinations
Mar 2000	Start GCSE Humanities course Geography (1.5 hours/ week) History (1.5 hours/week) Contemporary Issues Unit: (Tourism Travel & Leisure) Contemporary Issues Unit: (War & Peace)
June 2000	Geography & History lessons combined (3 hours /week) Students choose preferred coursework task for the Contemporary Issues unit: Either: Tourism in Developing countries; Or: The Vietnam War
Year 10	
Sep 2000	All students study Humanities (3 hours/week) Local Issues Unit: An inter-disciplinary coursework study in the locality.
Oct 2000	Modular teaching of the 3 core units for 9 weeks each: Geography: Patterns & Places History: The USA since 1945 ReL. S1.: Christianity & Contemporary Lifestyles.
April 2001	Year 10 internal examinations
May 2001	GCSE Humanities examination for all students who reach pre-determined standards in Year 10 internal examinations & coursework
June 2001	Students who have been entered for the GCSE Humanities exam begin their single subject courses by starting various coursework tasks; Students not entered for the coursework revisit the Contemporary Issues & local Issues units to attempt to improve coursework marks.
Year 11	
Sep 2001	Students who have gained C grade or above continue with choice of single subject for examination in May/June 2002. Students not entered continue to re-visit various GCSE Humanities modules. Students who have failed to achieve a C grade in Humanities are mentored and allowed to choose between re-sitting. Humanities or continuing with single subject choices.