

University of Cambridge: Programme Specifications

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this programme specification. At the time of publication, the programme specification has been approved by the relevant teaching Faculty or Department. It is, however, natural for courses to develop and change over time and we reserve the right, without notice, to withdraw, update or amend this programme specification at any time.

Programme Specifications for the Oriental Studies Tripos

1. Awarding Body	University of Cambridge
2. Teaching Institution	University of Cambridge
3. Accreditation details	None
4. Name of final award	B.A. (Hons.)
5. Programme Title	Oriental Studies Tripos
6. UCAS Code	Q970
7. Benchmark Statement	Languages and related studies
8. Qualifications Framework Level	H
9. Date of Production of programme specification	March 2004

10. Educational Aims of the Programme

-to provide teaching to undergraduate students in a number of the languages and civilizations of the Middle East and Asia as they have developed over five thousand years. The languages taught include Ancient Egyptian, Coptic; Akkadian, Sumerian; Hebrew, Aramaic; Arabic, Persian; Sanskrit, Prakrit, Hindi; Chinese; Japanese. Students learn the written and, where applicable, modern spoken forms of one or sometimes two languages. In some cases teaching is given in the philological and linguistic study of the languages, dialects and language groups concerned. The main emphasis is on the attainment of a satisfactory knowledge of the language or languages studied, as the key to the original source material essential to the proper understanding of each civilization. Students also take courses, as appropriate, in the history, literature, religion, philosophy, art, archaeology, politics, economics and social structure of the chosen area;

-to provide students with an education in these languages and civilizations which is informed by current developments in scholarship and research;

-to provide a stimulating, inherently interdisciplinary environment in which students can reach their intellectual potential;

-to allow students access to a broad range of intellectual enquiries within the best traditions of serious humanistic education and to enable them to develop sensitivity to and awareness of the similarities and dissimilarities between other cultures and societies and their own;

-to help students develop a range of cognitive, practical and interpersonal skills and abilities which will enable them to make a significant contribution in their chosen careers and walks of life, including training in academic research.

The programme is divided into two parts.

Part I

On completion of Part I students should have:

- made the transition in learning style and pace from school (or other educational background) to university;
- acquired competence in one or two languages, in reading, comprehension, writing and, where appropriate, speaking;
- developed strategies for independent and self-aware language-learning;
- gained a general familiarity with the history and cultures of the area(s) studied;
- acquired an appreciation of the literary content of texts written in the language(s) studied, gained through reading;
- acquired basic skills in the reading and analysis of secondary and some primary sources, essay writing, and effective participation in individually supervised and group discussion;
- gained the skills needed to make decisions on the further direction of their studies including the option of study of another language via the appropriate Part 1 course.

Part II

On completion of Part II, students should have

- acquired an advanced level of competence in one or more languages, where appropriate involving a period of study abroad; for modern languages this competence includes the ability to communicate fluently and appropriately, maintaining a high degree of grammatical accuracy in the target language(s); for both pre-modern and modern languages it includes the ability to exploit for a variety of purposes a broad range of written and spoken materials, as appropriate, in the target language(s);
- specialised in one or more aspects of the archaeology, literatures, history, society, religion and culture of the areas studied, through the reading of texts and the relevant scholarly literature, and have acquired the ability to critically evaluate these aspects through appropriate methodologies;
- gained a reasoned awareness and critical understanding of one or more cultures and societies and be able to describe, analyse and evaluate the similarities and dissimilarities of those cultures or societies and their own;
- acquired confidence in the independent exercise of subject-specific skills of careful reading, translation, analysis and interpretation of primary texts in the target language(s); acquired the ability to write clearly and to communicate effectively and constructively in classroom and group discussion.

11. Teaching

A key feature of the teaching structure is its diversity. There are three main forms of teaching: lectures, language classes and supervisions. Lectures and classes relate to the papers offered in the Tripos, including papers dealing with texts, historical and cultural issues and language papers. They are planned by each subject area and coordinated by the Faculty. Supervisions are provided by the colleges on the recommendation of the Faculty to give individual teaching through written work and language practice. The diversity and flexibility of the teaching arrangements is particularly valuable in enabling the Faculty to reach its educational objectives.

12. Assessment

Continuous and detailed monitoring (formative assessment) is an integral part of the teaching and learning of languages and is provided within the class or supervision through activities such as transcription and dictation, translation, composition, listening comprehension, grammar tests and so on. Formative assessment is also provided in the course of classroom and supervision discussion of student essays, reports and seminar presentations, where feedback is given in oral and written form. The chief method of formal (summative) assessment is by three-hour written examinations at the end of the academic year and submission of dissertation or course work as appropriate.

13. Skills

On completion of the course, the Faculty wants students to have:

-Language skills

Advanced competence in one or more languages in the classical and/or modern forms, and knowledge and understanding of the relevant civilization.

-Intellectual skills

the ability to learn steadily, to work intensively at language acquisition, to approach primary sources (texts or artefacts) critically and to attempt to evaluate them in their own historical, social and cultural context, to use secondary sources carefully and develop the ability to read actively, to engage with the opinions of others and to evaluate contradictory scholarly opinions.

-Practical skills

the ability to speak (where appropriate), read, write, understand and translate languages; use of libraries, use of bibliographies, dictionaries, concordances and other specialized reference works, taking notes effectively.

-Transferable skills

the ability to:

communicate information, ideas and arguments cogently and coherently both orally and in writing;

gather, process and evaluate critically material from a variety of paper, audio-visual and electronic sources;

work to deadlines and under pressure;

manage time;

set priorities;

work independently and with initiative;

present research in a seminar context.

Basic IT skills (email, computer and internet use, including use of foreign language software and internet resources, where appropriate);

Experience of travelling and/or living in a foreign country and communicating in the language or carrying out field work;

Linguistic skills;

Critical analysis, self-discipline, self-direction and team-work.

14. Career Destinations

Some graduates opt to pursue careers in academia as researchers or teachers. Many maintain a contact with the area they have studied in their subsequent employment. Examples include journalism, the civil service (especially the Foreign Office), business, banking, the law, teaching overseas or international scientific or welfare agencies.

15. Quality Management

- 15.1 The Faculty Board is responsible for all teaching in the Faculty and monitors all aspects of educational provision as part of its regular business.
- 15.2 All courses are continually reviewed by the subject areas which provide them.
- 15.3 Reports of External Examiners are scrutinized by the Faculty and the General Board's Education Section. Suggestions for improvement are acted upon where necessary.
- 15.4 Students offer feedback through annual course appraisals and are able to raise concerns with the Subject Coordinator at any time. The subject areas may also organize staff-student meetings.
- 15.5 Colleges provide feedback through regular contacts between students and their Directors of Studies and Tutors, who communicate points of interest or concern to the Faculty Board. Colleges also provide students with self-assessment forms in the Lent term and encourage students to comment on the teaching they have received.
- 15.6 All tenured staff are subject to biennial appraisal according to procedures which operate throughout the University.
- 15.7 Holders of untenured posts are appraised annually.
- 15.8 Staff are advised of staff development programmes run by the University and outside agencies such as the ILT.
- 15.9 The Faculty is subject to review by the General Board every six years.