

## **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 Specification: Theological and Religious Studies Tripos**

- 1) Awarding Institution: The University of Cambridge
- 2) Teaching Institutions: The University of Cambridge and the Colleges.
- 3) Final Award: Bachelor of Arts
- 4) Subject: Theology and Religious Studies taught over three years in Parts I (1<sup>st</sup> year), IIA (2<sup>nd</sup> year) and IIB (3<sup>rd</sup> year).
- 5) UCAS Code V600BA/TRS
- 6) Typical offer AAB, average 'A' level score of 29 points. Admission is based on high achievement in 'A' level or equivalent examinations, school recommendations and success in interview. On average there are 40-50 students in each year, all of whom are full-time. Affiliated students, most of whom are ordinands, undertake the degree in two years and take Parts IIA and IIB.
- 7) QAA score 23
- 8) RAE score 5
- 9) The core teaching staff consists of 23 University Teaching Officers. In addition a wide variety of people from the Colleges and the institutions of the Cambridge Theological Federation teach in supervisions and assist with the programme of lectures.
- 10) The Faculty of Divinity is situated in a building on the Sidgwick Site on West Road in Cambridge where there are lecture rooms. The Faculty has a well stocked library with about 50,000 books and a computer room.
- 11) QAA Benchmarking Group: Theology and Religious Studies
- 12) Date of production March 2004
- 13) Educational aims of the programme

The course aims:

- i) to provide teaching and learning to undergraduate students in the theologies, scriptures, histories and philosophies, doctrines and practices of Christianity; and, as far as resources permit, of Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, principally within their own traditions but also by means of comparative approaches;
- ii) to provide high calibre students with an excellent education in these traditions which is informed by current developments in scholarship and research;
- iii) to provide a stimulating environment in which students can reach their intellectual potential;
- iv) to provide an integrated structure of learning and teaching;
- v) to help students develop a wide range of intellectual abilities and skills which will enable them to make a significant contribution in their chosen careers and walks of life, including training in academic research.

## **Part I**

On completion of Part I students should have

- 1 made the transition in learning style and pace from school (or other educational background) to university;
- 2 acquired a basic proficiency in a scriptural language of a major religious tradition;
- 3 acquired basic knowledge of the origins, history and theology of biblical texts;
- 4 acquired an introductory knowledge of at least two further sub-disciplines of the subject;
- 5 acquired basic learning skills in
  - the reading and analysis of primary and secondary sources;
  - essay-writing; and
  - effective participation in individually supervised and group discussion;
- 6 acquired sufficient knowledge of the range of sub-disciplines to make informed choices of subsequent more specialised study.

The first year introduces the six main sub-disciplines of the Faculty's teaching and research (Old and New Testaments, Church History, Doctrine, Religious Studies and Philosophy of Religion and Ethics), and a grounding in the major scriptural languages (Hebrew, Greek, Sanskrit and Qur'anic Arabic). All students have to study either Old or New Testament, one of the languages and a non-examined introductory course which provides an overview of the discipline.

## **Part IIA**

Candidates are of standing to take Part IIA if they have obtained honours in Part I or another honours examination, provided that they have kept at least four and not more than twelve terms of residence.

On completion of Part IIA, students should have required in addition

- 1 subject-specific knowledge, through the study of primary and secondary sources, of the major themes and issues in up to four of the sub-disciplines of the subject, to a level sufficient to lay the foundations for, and inform choice of, advanced specialisation in some or all of them in Part IIB.
- 2 confidence in the independent exercise of subject-specific skills of
  - careful reading, analysis and critical interpretation of primary texts;
  - the construction of arguments and the assembling of relevant evidence;
  - clear written expression in essay form; and
  - effective and constructive participation in individually supervised and group discussion.

Students may also have acquired

- intermediate proficiency in one or more scriptural languages.

## **Part IIB**

Candidates are of standing to take Part IIB if they have obtained honours in Part IIA or another honours examination (not including Part I), provided that they have kept at least seven and not more than fifteen terms of residence.

On completion of Part IIB students should have acquired in addition

- 1 advanced understanding of up to four sub-disciplines of the subject
- 2 a more advanced level of subject-related skills, in all cases through the
  - study of specialised topics in a particular field;
  - acquisition of interdisciplinary perspectives and skills; and
  - acquisition of skills of oral presentation to, and of constructive and critical participation in, seminar classes and larger groups.

Students will also have had the opportunity to acquire

- an advanced proficiency in one or more scriptural languages and in the interpretation of scriptural texts; and
- detailed knowledge of a specific issue in a chosen field, of the basic principles and skills of scholarly research, of independent and critical judgement, and of the construction of complex argument, through the writing of a dissertation.

Students continue to study two of the sub-disciplines at a more complex level. Students may offer a dissertation in place of a special subject. This enables students to engage in an aspect of the research activity of the Faculty and in an integrative approach to the subject.

It is possible to take one or two years of Theology and Religious Studies before or after transferring from another subject.

## **Teaching**

Teaching is delivered by lectures and classes in the Faculty which relate to the papers offered in the Tripos; by language classes; and by supervisions in the Colleges which provide individual teaching through written work and feedback thereon. Throughout students are encouraged to undertake independent reading and study to consolidate what is being taught.

## **Assessment**

Formative assessment is provided through the supervision system where feedback is given in oral and written form. Summative assessment, which takes place at the end of each year, is by three hour examination, submission of essays and dissertation.

## **Skills**

On completion of the course, the University wants students to have acquired the following skills.

- i) Knowledge and understanding of the subject matter.
- ii) Intellectual skills: The written work which students undertake enables them to learn how to study steadily, assimilate issues and large amounts of literature swiftly, evaluate theological positions and evidence critically, to produce succinct arguments to tight deadlines and to engage with those with whom they disagree. Particular methodologies used include: textual critical, exegetical, hermeneutical, historical, philosophical, doctrinal and ethical. Students will have acquired the skill to engage with the thought of major religious thinkers and their traditions, and to understand the

historical, social and cultural context which produced a text or affected a writer. Students will be able to read texts in the original language critically and be able to evaluate them in their own context. Those studying theology will become sensitive to the problems of religious language. The dissertation develops the skill of articulating an argument at length and working independently under the direction of a supervisor. Students will learn to present an argument and attain analytical skills. By the end of the course students should have completed a degree which could be a basis for postgraduate study.

- iii) Practical Skills: use of the library, using a bibliography, taking notes effectively, learning languages.
- iv) Transferable skills: the ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing; to work to deadlines and under pressure; to manage time; to set priorities; to formulate an argument; to work independently and with initiative; basic IT skills (email, computer and internet use); critical analysis; to present papers in a seminar context; linguistic skills; skills of analysis and interpretation; self-discipline, self-direction; and respect for other views.

### **Career Destinations**

Some graduates in Theology and Religious Studies go into teaching or full-time religious ministry, but most, as with many other courses, obtain jobs in a wide variety of careers: the civil service, personnel work, media, business and management.

### **Quality Management**

The Faculty Board is responsible for all teaching in the Faculty. The quality of the course is maintained by:

- i) scrutiny of the reports of External Examiners by the Faculty and the General Board's Education Section. Suggestions by them for improvement are acted on where necessary;
- ii) student feedback through lecture questionnaires;
- iii) student participation in the Teaching Committee, Subject Committees and the Faculty Board;
- iv) appraisal and evaluation of staff, and the provision of staff development programmes; and
- v) the General Board's programme for reviewing Faculties and Departments every six years.