

University of Cambridge: Programme Specifications

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ADVANCED DIPLOMA IN THE STUDY OF RELIGION

1	Awarding Body	University of Cambridge
2.	Teaching Institution	Institute of Continuing Education
3.	Accreditation Details	Faculty of Divinity
4.	Name of Final Award	Advanced Diploma in the Study of Religion
5.	Programme Title	Study of Religion
6.	UCAS Code	N/A
7.	Benchmark Statement(s)	Theology and Religious Studies
8.	Qualifications Framework Level	FHEQ Level 6
9.	Date of Revision of Programme Specification	01/01/10

A non-modular Advanced Diploma in the Study of Religion is proposed by the University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education (IoCE), as part of its programme of credit-bearing, modular and non-modular courses at CATS Levels 1, 2 and 3 (FHEQ levels 4, 5 and 6) offered to part-time adult students.

IoCE is a General Board, non-School institution whose purpose can be defined in two complementary ways. It is a conduit both for transmission of the University's knowledge and research on the one hand and for enabling members of the public to access higher education courses, whether for personal interest or professional development, on the other. In these ways it contributes significantly to the University's public engagement and widening participation commitments.

Applicants seeking entry to Public Programmes courses at Level 3 should normally be able to demonstrate significant previous study in disciplines cognate to the course to which they have applied. Academic experience up to and including the second year of undergraduate study in a cognate discipline, for example, the Diploma of Higher Education or an equivalent qualification, will normally be regarded as a minimum requirement. Applicants who have undertaken significant work at an appropriate level in this field, but who lack the appropriate academic qualifications may, however, also be considered, and may be asked to submit a piece of written work as part of conditions for their entry to the course.

The Advanced Diploma will be directed and taught by Dr Justin Meggitt, University Senior Lecturer with responsibility for Religious Studies, assisted where required by Supervisors chosen from IoCE's Tutor Panel, all of whom are assessed under quality assurance procedures approved by the General Board. It is a requirement of Panel membership that tutors should have academic qualifications and specialised expertise in their discipline appropriate to the teaching which they are invited to undertake, as well as experience in teaching adult learners with widely differing levels of academic experience and expertise. Academic responsibility for monitoring the performance of individual tutors working within the Advanced Diploma in the Study of Religion rests with Dr Meggitt

Aims of the Programme

The course aims to:

- provide a one-year course offering academic grounding in research skills in the critical study of religion through a research project which will enable students to investigate aspects of the discipline in which they have developed an interest;
- offer an opportunity to develop research skills to those who wish to undertake a higher level qualification but do not wish to undertake a longer-term course such as a Master's degree;
- provide an entry route for progression into a Master's degree for individuals who would benefit from study at that level but who are not, at this stage, appropriately qualified;
- develop in students an understanding of the concepts, processes and skills required for researching an analytical question relating to the study of religion.
- help students to place their research within the context of the wider academic literature to which their interests relate, and to understand the importance of developing arguments which explain relationships between a specific question and general theoretical concepts, issues and debates;
- encourage in students the development of appropriate critical skills, especially: evaluating the work of other researchers; identifying and evaluating appropriate primary and secondary data; and identifying and evaluating appropriate methods of analysis, interpretation, and evaluation;
- support students in undertaking and completing a dissertation of between 10,000 – 12,000 words.

Learning Outcomes of the Programme

Knowledge and understanding

By the end of the Advanced Diploma, within the constraints of the course, students should have:

- acquired critical, in-depth knowledge of their selected sub-field of religious studies.
- gained a critical ability to summarise, represent and interpret a range of both primary and secondary sources including materials from different disciplines.
- demonstrate comprehension of and intelligent engagement with at least one religious tradition.
- analyse, where appropriate, the religion's or religions' classical sources and their subsequent articulations by some interpreters of the tradition(s) in different historical periods, and in different social or geographical settings
- gained a critical awareness of how changing theoretical positions have influenced the manner in which textual and material data within their chosen speciality is identified, analysed and interpreted;
- demonstrated an awareness of key themes, debates, and methods of the discipline and, where appropriate, related disciplines from, for example, the humanities or the social sciences.
- stated clearly, discussed and demonstrated critical comprehension of some of the following: the political, social, textual, intellectual, historical, theological, ritual, ethical, institutional or aesthetic expressions of the religion(s) studied

Critical skills

At the end of the Advanced Diploma, students should be equipped to:

- plan, design, execute and report on an extended personal research project in a dissertation of 10,000 – 12,000 words a programme of primary research relating to topic within the study of religion, working independently.
- demonstrate autonomy in planning and managing resources within broad guidelines;
- demonstrate a critical evaluation of research strategies, primary and secondary sources, research methods and methodologies and the wider literature.
- expand their knowledge and critical in-depth understanding of their selected sub-fields within religious studies.;
- evaluate and apply appropriate scholarly principles and concepts to problems raised by the critical study of religion.

Teaching and Learning Methods

The course focuses on research methods bringing together students' own interests in a particular topic within a sub-field within the study of religion with a programme of independent study, guided by five supervisions, and culminating in a dissertation of 10,000 – 12,000 words.

Students' work is undertaken in six stages which are designed to familiarise them with theories, concepts and debates and their application to a problem the study of religion, and to teach them the elements of constructing a research proposal, putting together and managing a research timetable, as well as the essential, skills and methods of the research process, and the writing of a logical and well-argued dissertation. The assignments are carefully structured to follow the stages of the research process.

Each of the five assignments is followed by a supervision. Supervisions are supplemented by written general and detailed comments on the assignments and by a limited volume of advice by telephone and e-mail.

Students are eligible for reading rights in the University Library and the library of the Faculty of Divinity. Depending on the subject of their research, students may also have access to specialist resources of non-University institutions based in Cambridge (such as the libraries of Tyndale House, the Centre for the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations, or the Henry Martyn Centre). On request they may have a letter of introduction for university or college libraries for the area in which they live. Generic learning resources are available on the Institute's Virtual Learning Environment.

Assessment Methods

- Five formative assignments, each of which must be completed in order to pass the course;
- A summative dissertation of 10,000 – 12,000 words, inclusive of references and exclusive of bibliography.

Although the five formative assignments are required, the award of the Advanced Diploma is made on the basis of the dissertation.

In addition, students will be expected to attend all supervisions.

Programme Structure

The course will be a named advanced diploma, a nationally recognised qualification which is equivalent to 120 credits at HE Level 3. The Advanced Diploma is equivalent to the third year of an undergraduate degree.

The course is undertaken with the support and guidance of a Supervisor. The five assignments, five supervisions and dissertation form the framework for the course. The periods between assignments demonstrate some flexibility, but the whole course cannot be extended beyond 36 weeks after the first supervision.

The five assignments (each between 3,000 and 3,500 words) are formative. The final (summative) assignment is a dissertation of 10,000 – 12,000 words.

Delivery

This course is offered over nine months but has the possibility of up to six months' extension, if there are mitigating circumstances.

Programme Requirements

The course is targeted at:

- those who wish to gain a qualification at Level 3 (FHEQ 6) in Religious Studies.
- those seeking entry to a Master's degree but who are not yet appropriately qualified.
- those engaged in working in all aspects of the study of religion, whether directly or indirectly, whether as religious professionals, educators or others for whom such an expertise is desirable (e.g. journalists, government and NGO employees) who wish to undertake their own research project;

Progression

Successful completion of the Advanced Diploma will require students to demonstrate the appropriate level of achievement against the learning outcomes of each module, and the learning outcomes of the Advanced Diploma as a whole. The minimum criteria for achieving a pass at HE Level 3 are outlined in Section 3.6 of the *IoCE Students' Handbook (2009-2010)*.

Students who have completed the Advanced Diploma to an appropriate standard may be able to progress to Master's degrees such as the MSt in the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations or the MPhil in Theology in the Faculty of Divinity, or to Master's degrees which are currently offered by a number of other universities.

Credit awarded by the Institute can be transferred into the degree programmes of other higher education providers. The amount of credit which can be transferred into degree programmes varies from institution to institution and is always at the discretion of the receiving institution.

Employability

Students completing this Advanced Diploma will have demonstrated high levels of motivation and personal commitment through part-time study. They will also have gained and demonstrated a number of valuable transferable skills, including:

- communicate information, ideas, arguments, principles, theories, and develop an argument by a variety of means, for example, of formative assignments of various lengths and a summative dissertation which are clearly and effectively organised and presented
- identify, gather and analyse primary data and source material, whether through textual studies or fieldwork
- attend to, reproduce accurately, reflect on and interact with the ideas and arguments of others
- engage with empathy, integrity and critical reflection with the convictions and behaviours of others.
- undertake independent/self-directed study/learning (including time management) and reflect on one's strengths and weaknesses as a learner.
- make discriminating use of a full range of library resources in order to identify appropriate source material, compile bibliographies, to inform research.
- use IT and computer skills for data capture, to identify appropriate source material, and support research.
- show independence in thought, and critical self-awareness about one's own beliefs, commitments and prejudices.

Managing Teaching Quality and Standards

The teaching quality and standards of the course will be monitored throughout by Dr Justin Meggitt, who will report annually to the Subject Moderation Panel, consisting of the internal, university and external moderators and other Faculty and IoCE members as agreed by the Education Committee.

Student Support

Academic advice to students taking Public Programmes courses is available both before and after they have registered for a course: first, from Dr Justin Meggitt and, once the course has begun, from the course director and/or the course tutor.

Administrative enquiries are dealt with by Academic Programme Managers.

All students are provided at the start of a course with the IoCE Students' Handbook.