

University of Cambridge: Programme Specifications

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MASTER OF STUDIES IN THE STUDY OF JEWISH-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS

1	Awarding body	University of Cambridge
2	Teaching institution	University of Cambridge (with the Centre for the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations)
3	Accreditation details	None
4	Name of final award	Master of Studies
5	Programme title	Study of Jewish-Christian Relations
6	JACS code(s)	V600
7	Relevant QAA benchmark statement(s)	None
8	Qualifications framework level	7 (Masters)
9	Date specification was produced/ last revised	10 May 2010
10	Date specification was last reviewed	10 May 2010

Educational Aims of the Programme

This two-year course aims to provide learners with relevant experience at first degree level (or in appropriate professional contexts) with: the opportunity to carry out advanced research in the field of Jewish-Christian Relations; and the opportunity to acquire or develop skills and expertise relevant to their research interests.

The MSt offers education and research training at Master's level. The programme will provide learners with:

- i. a systematic understanding of the study of Jewish-Christian relations and a critical awareness of new developments and problems within the field;
- ii. a comprehensive understanding of the methods and tools of research within the subject area;
- iii. conceptual tools that will enable them to evaluate critically current research, advanced scholarship and methodologies within the field.

Four compulsory papers are taught and examined in the first year. The four papers are:

Foundations: The course addresses key stages in the interaction between Judaism and Christianity and their processes of self-definition and mutual exchange, including responses to contemporary challenges. Attention is given to the definition of the (cross-disciplinary) field of Jewish-Christian Relations. Students engage in depth with a number of case studies. A list of the topics prescribed for the following academic year will be published on an annual basis.

History: The course examines key historical moments, events and figures in the Jewish-Christian encounter. The role of social, political and philosophical issues in the shaping of the

encounter will be discussed. A list of prescribed topics for the following academic year will be published on an annual basis.

Scripture: This course examines Jewish and Christian approaches to foundational texts, and their significance for the Jewish-Christian encounter. Students study both key texts, and the history of interaction between Jewish and Christian commentators. The course also considers issues associated with contemporary reading of Scripture. A list of prescribed texts and topics for the following academic year will be published on an annual basis.

Culture: This course examines how Jewish and Christian identities and differences (separately and in relation) are played out in a variety of cultural forms, including literature, film, museums, and material artefacts. Students focus in detail on examples from a range of geographical areas. Whilst the emphasis is on the close analysis of these 'texts' and their reception, attention is also given to theoretical questions in the study of Jewish-Christian relations. A list of prescribed texts and topics for the following academic year will be published on an annual basis.

The MSt takes place over two years running from the first day of Full Michaelmas Term of the first year to the last Friday in July of the second year of the course. In furtherance of the programme's aims, the taught elements of the syllabus are offered during the first year and are assessed by written assignments (one 4,000-word assignment per paper). Provision is made for formative assessment and sessions will be offered in study and research techniques (including the use of information technology) appropriate for Master's level work.

Students completing the first year successfully will then spend their second year researching and writing a 15,000-word dissertation on a topic of their choice, subject to the approval of the MSt Subcommittee of the Degree Committee of the Faculty of Divinity. Dissertation work will be individually supervised and will be assessed by two examiners, neither of whom may be the supervisor. A *viva voce* examination will be held when all three of the following conditions are met:

- i. a dissertation has been marked as 'borderline' (i.e. 59 or 69),
- ii. both examiners agree it is desirable, and
- iii. the viva will be conducted in the presence of an external examiner.

The purpose of the *viva* in these cases is solely to ascertain whether or not the candidate's dissertation merits a mark in the higher class (i.e. a Pass in the case of an original mark of 59, or a Distinction in the case of a mark of 69).

Programme Outcomes

Knowledge and Understanding

By the end of the two-year course, students should have:

- (1) developed a systematic and substantive knowledge and understanding of the scope and history of Jewish-Christian Relations, and of the critical debates and current problems associated with its academic study; and
- (2) developed to a high level the conceptual frameworks and critical skills which enable them to offer a rigorous critique of current research and methodologies, and to undertake and evaluate their own independent research in that field.

Teaching and Learning Methods

Students' readiness to meet these outcomes is developed through two hundred and forty hours of formal instruction, including lectures, seminars, plenaries, and individual tuition. These will include sessions on research methods, writing (of essays and dissertations), making oral and written presentations, working independently, and utilising appropriate information technologies. Critical reflection on guided independent reading forms an essential part of students' learning on the course.

The use of online resources compiled specifically for the MSt forms an integral part of the course. The balance between online and classroom-based hours will vary according to the mode of study. For students following track (A) the online component will mainly provide resources for the weekly classes in the first year. For students following track (B) a higher proportion of the two hundred and forty hours of formal instruction is conducted online, but these students are also required to attend and participate actively in a summer school at the end of the first year (of two weeks duration and amounting to forty contact hours) and they will also have to be present at the outset of the course for an intensive induction programme (lasting five days and amounting to fifteen contact hours).

Assessment

(1) and (2) are assessed via written assignments (one 4,000-word assignment per taught paper) and the 15,000-word dissertation. In some cases a *viva voce* examination will also be held, but as with the current Faculty of Divinity practice, this will be solely to determine whether or not the candidate's dissertation merits a mark in the higher class (i.e. a Pass in the case of an original mark of 59, or a Distinction in the case of a mark of 69).

Skills and Other Attributes

By the end of the course, students should have demonstrated the ability to:

- (3) deploy to a high level skills entailed in being able to locate, read, interpret and analyse primary and secondary source materials in the field of Jewish-Christian Relations (including where relevant the use of information technologies);
- (4) demonstrate self-direction and originality in formulating a research topic, and creating and implementing a research design;
- (5) write a lucid and cogently argued work of the required length and standard;
- (6) present complex ideas and sound judgements in a public forum and contribute constructively to debates in an international academic environment.

Teaching and Learning Methods

In the first year, (3), (4) and (5) are developed through close interaction between students, their peers, and their teachers, in discussion (in the classroom and online), as well as through guided independent reading and research and the writing of Master's level assignments. These outcomes receive additional, focussed support via a range of skills-related sessions and materials (in the classroom and online) as indicated in '11.1 Teaching and learning methods'.

In the second year, increased support for outcomes (4) and (5) is achieved by the provision of one-to-one supervisions with a designated expert supervisor.

(6) is developed throughout the course as students prepare for and receive feedback on the presentation of ideas and research conclusions in group seminars, and in online discussion fora.

Assessment

Assessment of skills (3) to (6) is both formative and summative.

All students complete and receive feedback on compulsory written exercises assigned and completed in the first term of the course. In keeping with current QAA guidelines on best practice (*QAA Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education – Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning) – Sept. 2004*) students following track (B) undertake a greater number of these exercises. Care is taken to balance the demands placed on students across the range of teaching, learning and assessment activities to ensure comparability and to prevent the possibility that a student may be advantaged or disadvantaged by the choice of a particular study track.

In relation to summative work, skills (3) and (5) are assessed via written assignments (one 4,000-word assignment per taught paper) and (3), (4) and (5) by the 15,000-word dissertation.

(6) is assessed formatively by feedback on the presentation of ideas and research conclusions in group seminars and in online fora. (6) also forms part of the summative assessment of candidates who, in accordance with Faculty of Divinity regulations, are required to attend a *viva voce* examination. Such an examination takes place in the presence of an external examiner and the purpose of such an examination is solely to ascertain whether or not the candidate's dissertation merits a mark in the higher class (i.e. a Pass in the case of an original mark of 59, or a Distinction in the case of a mark of 69).

Programme Structure

Year 2

September	Examiners' Meeting: degree awarded.
Mid-Late July	Viva voce examination of selected candidates where required; subject to Faculty of Divinity Regulations.
1 July	Dissertation due. Dissertation double marked and sent to External Examiner. (Supervision of dissertation work is expected to be ongoing between September and June, at times and locations negotiated individually.)

Year 1

July	Intensive Residential Summer School (of two weeks and amounting to forty contact hours), compulsory for all students. Fourth essay due at the end of July. Double marked and feedback given in August.
June	Third essay due on final day of Easter Full Term. Double marked and feedback given during the Summer School.

1 April	Research Proposal due. Proposal is assessed and feedback given. Title subsequently approved formally by the Faculty of Divinity Degree Committee.
March	Second essay due on final day of Lent Full Term. Double marked and feedback given at the start of next term.
December	First essay due on final day of Michaelmas Full Term. Double marked and feedback given at the start of next term.
September	Entry to the MSt course, with First Class/2:1 in first degree or the equivalent. Induction (lasting five days and amounting to fifteen contact hours). Students contact key academic and administrative personnel. Introduction to Cambridge facilities, initial sessions on research methods and resources (including the setting of compulsory written exercises), on the course WWW site and online learning environment, and on the aims and requirements for each of the four taught papers. Students receive handbooks and subject teaching packages (including reading lists and assignment titles).

Requirements for the Award of the Degree

The examination is divided into two parts: four written assignments of 4,000 words each and a dissertation of 15,000 words. In all instances the word limits include notes but exclude bibliographies. In order to pass the MSt, a candidate must pass both parts: that is, she or he must achieve an overall pass on the written assignments, and a pass on the dissertation.

The written assignments are completed in year 1, and admission to the second year is contingent on these being completed successfully. One fail mark in the written assignments does not necessarily bar a candidate from progressing to the second year, provided that the examiners judge it to be outweighed by the candidate's performance in the other three assignments.

The assessment criteria, marking and classing are the same as those for the MPhil in Theological and Religious Studies:

1 Criteria for assessment

In assessing individual answers, scripts and whole performances, examiners should have regard to three principal criteria:

- a) the extent to which the candidate addressed the question(s) asked;
- b) the quality of the argument offered;
- c) the range and depth of the knowledge and understanding shown in relation to the question(s) asked.

It is recognised that these criteria overlap; nevertheless they should be the starting point for the allocation of a mark. Examiners' notes under these headings are intended to facilitate discussion in examiners' meetings.

2 Progression

Candidates for the MSt are expected to show progression in achievement beyond that of an undergraduate degree. Thus particularly in relation to criterion (c), candidates will be expected to display greater knowledge and critical awareness than at the undergraduate level. Marking should reflect this progression.

3 Mark Ranges

The range of marks for each class is as follows:

Distinction	100-70
Pass	69-60
Fail	59-0

4 Assigning a Mark

Examiners should mark each unit of assessment (that is, each of the four written assignments and the dissertation) out of 100.

5 Borderlines

There are only two borderline marks, i.e. 59 for a marginal fail and 69 for a marginal pass. It is assumed that in borderline cases discussed by the Examiners collectively there is an understood willingness to move the mark up by one. Similarly, a mark of 60, 70 etc. should not be questioned but taken to be clearly within the relevant class.

6 Individual and Agreed Marks

The two examiners for a paper should reach an agreed mark for each candidate between them. If examiners disagree over the class in which the written assignment falls, the advice of an external examiner must be sought. If there is a disagreement of 8 marks or more between examiners, they may seek the advice of an external examiner; and indeed examiners may wish to seek such advice for other reasons in particular cases. A clear record should be kept of such cases, so as to ensure equitable treatment between papers: it is unfortunate if it transpires that several scripts for one paper were re-read, whereas in another paper fewer scripts were re-read even though the level of discrepancy was comparable.

7 Rules for classing

Candidates' work is in two parts, weighted equally: (i) a dissertation and (ii) four other pieces of written work. Both parts must be passed for the Degree to be awarded. Within part (ii), a candidate's class will normally be determined by that in which the majority of marks fall. Thus two marks above 69 ensure a Distinction, two marks below 59 a Fail, etc. In any borderline case, consideration should be given to any marks ending with 9, since the raising of such marks could determine the matter without further discussion.

If in part (ii) a candidate secures marks in three different classes, attention should be given to how far below the respective borderlines the marks are.

Only in difficult cases should any discrepancy between the marks of the two first examiners be reconsidered. There are two reasons for this: if the first marks are resorted to too quickly, examiners will be discouraged from taking the time to reach an agreed mark; and if first marks are considered as a matter of routine, the case for having agreed marks at all falls.

An MSt dissertation is the key indicator of a student's preparedness and aptitude for postgraduate research. The chief criteria by which a dissertation may be assessed are by reference to topic, sources and treatment:

- a) choice of topic; its situation within its context; and its situation in current knowledge and debate; the ability to establish why it constitutes a genuine lacuna or desideratum in scholarship.
- b) identification and study of primary sources or fundamental issues; understanding, analysis and interpretation of sources; contribution to the subject from primary sources or reconsideration of existing literature on the subject;
- c) organisation of argument and narrative; capacity to summarise findings; awareness of limits of knowledge; style of writing; quality of presentation.

Few theses will satisfy all criteria equally, but patterns characteristic of each class of degree may be identified in broad terms. The final mark will be a balance among them.

Oral examinations shall be held when all three of the following conditions are met: (1) a dissertation has been marked as 'borderline' (i.e. 59 or 69), (2) both examiners agree it is desirable, and (3) the viva will be conducted in the presence of an external examiner. The purpose of the viva in these cases is solely to ascertain whether or not the candidate's dissertation merits a mark in the higher class (i.e. a Pass in the case of an original mark of 59, or a Distinction in the case of a mark of 69).

The following criteria will be employed in determining the class of the dissertation:

Distinction (70+): The topic has been treated effectively within the word limit and with material reasonably available from the period of research. The writer has conceptualised the topic and situated it within its larger context, which is explained only to the extent needed to understand the contribution of the thesis. The state of knowledge of the subject is indicated and the inquiry is related to it, without merely paraphrasing the ideas of others. Primary sources, or other fundamental issues, have been identified with flair and imagination; they have been studied critically and assiduously, probably using linguistic or other special skills. All successful theses must use some primary sources or tackle fundamental issues in the study of Jewish-Christian Relations. Normally these will enable a thesis to make its distinctive contribution to the subject, perhaps by means of a case-study or the elucidation of a particular topic or set of issues. Some works will merit a Distinction more for their reconsideration of an argument, a situation, a theory or a set of ideas.

First-class work will display critical understanding of the provenance, context and meaning of sources or ideas and the relationship among them, together with a thorough knowledge of the relevant secondary literature. There will be a clearly structured argument, appropriately illustrated with narrative or other explanatory detail, but not in such a way that the underlying argument is obscured. Rather, the detail will serve an overall argument stated clearly in the introduction and conclusion, developed systematically and held before the reader throughout. Work of the highest quality will be aware of its limitations and of questions left unanswered. The writing will be lucid, persuasive and probably elegant. The presentation will be immaculate, with references to source materials and other authorities in a standard form, and a full bibliography of relevant materials and secondary works consulted, organised to the best convenience of the reader. A distinguished thesis will be suitable for publication as an article in a refereed journal in the field.

Pass (marks 69-60): Work within this class can cover a broad range of achievement. It may show some of the qualities of a first-rate thesis, but in less sustained form. It will display a

high level of competence. The topic will have been chosen carefully to permit the study of primary sources or a set of issues of fundamental importance, and will be manageable within the time and space available, although in some cases it may be a little narrow and constitute a useful illustration of the familiar.

The subject will be situated within its context and there will be a fair understanding of the state of knowledge and debate, but in both areas there may be some unnecessary background material or recapitulation of established views, while the writer may merely state the larger context and then neglect it for the detailed topic. Primary sources may have been examined with great industry or the issues considered with great care, but there may be gaps in either the sources or the issues discussed. There may be a tendency to reproduce or paraphrase rather than analyse the material under consideration, or there may be failures of understanding or neglect of difficulties. Although an argument will be stated, there may be a tendency to get lost in detail or to substitute narrative or exposition for critical analysis. Critical reflection on the limitations of the work may be incomplete. The writing will probably be lucid, but possibly a little colourless, repetitive or verbose. Presentation will generally be good, with references to most authorities and a considerable bibliography, but some important primary or secondary works may have been overlooked. These weaknesses will be more marked at the bottom of the class.

Fail (59-0): Some dissertations in this class will display all the weaknesses of work marked in the low 60s, but generally in more pronounced form. Other theses will have a major flaw which prevents a higher mark. The topic may be too ambitious to handle in the space available or so familiar that there is little scope for an interesting contribution. The primary sources may have proved disappointing or not to have been studied with adequate time and attention, so that much space is filled with 'background'; the issues may not be presented adequately. Alternatively there may be an inability to relate the topic to the wider theological or religious context, which may be sketched vaguely and then forgotten while the writer plunges into detail. Treatment of the primary sources or issues may show failures of understanding or lack of curiosity. The thesis may be structured by the information available rather than by the need to address a clearly-formulated question. The structure is likely to be clumsy, either episodic with barely-connected chapters, or dominated by extensive exposition. Any overall argument will at best be stated at the beginning and end, or possibly left for the reader to work out. Large issues may go unexplored. The capacity for brief summary or self-criticism is likely to be slight. The style may be unclear, repetitious and ungainly. Factual errors, non sequiturs, self-contradictions and obvious gaps in knowledge are likely in weaker theses. Presentation may be careful and even pedantic, but in other cases the typing will be poor, the footnotes sporadic and unstandardised and the bibliography ill-organised and incomplete.

The clearest cases of Failure are theses that should probably have been abandoned long before. One reason for disaster may be a topic which did not permit serious study of primary sources or fundamental issues. Another could be failure to examine the obviously indispensable sources, primary or secondary. Either case might be compounded by ignorance of the general area of study and the literature about it. The result might be a thesis which met the requirements of length and presentation, but had nothing of interest to say. Alternatively a thesis might show major misunderstanding of the subject or the sources. It might consist of undigested primary or secondary material presented in an unstructured form with virtually no relation to an argument. The argument might be either disorganised or unsustainable. A thesis of this quality might show signs of haste or inadequate command of written English. Although these faults could co-exist with excellent presentation, there would be a strong chance of error, disorder and a lack of references and bibliography.

9 Written Assignments (see table below):

The following criteria will be employed in determining the class of the four written assignments:

Class	Numerical Range	Addressing the Question or Topic	Quality of Argument	Range of Knowledge/Understanding
Distinction	70+	Work which engages closely with the question or (where a topic is set) identifies the key issues to be tackled, and addresses the broader implications, demonstrating the ability to engage with abstract issues. The structure of the answer will allow a clear, coherent unfolding of the writer's argument. Descriptive and factual elements will be linked effectively to the argument, and their relevance to the issues under discussion made clear.	Work which displays the ability to use the knowledge at the writer's disposal to the very best effect. Linguistically and structurally the writing will be clear, authoritative and to the point. Where relevant writers will be aware of scholarly debate in the field but will go beyond merely paraphrasing the ideas of others and demonstrate their own conceptual command. In this sense work should be original rather than derivative. It may, more rarely, also be original in the sense of putting forward persuasive and well-supported new ideas or making unexpected conclusions.	Work which displays an impressively wide range of knowledge and critical understanding, drawing on evidence relevant to the answer, knowledge of textual variants where appropriate and showing awareness of the conclusions of other writers. Awareness of argument and interpretation will be held in an appropriate balance with factual information, so that the work is neither too generalising nor too weighed down by detail. Writers will show the ability to evaluate the knowledge at their disposal, where necessary identifying apparent contradictions and resolving them.
Pass	69-60	Work within this class can cover a broad range of achievement. It will display understanding of the question or (where a topic is set) a clear identification of the issues, and will deploy a range of relevant evidence in answering it. At best it will be regularly, but not consistently analytical, perhaps failing to explore all the implications of the issue under discussion, or not bringing out the full relevance of the evidence cited. These weaknesses will be more marked at the bottom of the class.	Work which displays the ability to deploy ideas and knowledge to create a sustained argument. The argument will shape the structure of the work rather than emerging piecemeal, but will lack the conceptual grasp of a first class answer, demonstrating rather the ability to synthesise the view of others. At the top of the range this will be done persuasively and efficiently, but work towards the bottom of the scale, although competently structured, will lack sharpness. There may be a tendency to state ideas, rather than analysing them, or the argument may rest on unsupported claims.	Work which at best reveals a high density of relevant knowledge and deploys it effectively, demonstrating an awareness of critical issues. Nevertheless the work falls short of the highest standards in some way, perhaps by an imbalance between information and interpretation. At the bottom of the scale this imbalance may be marked, or the knowledge deployed may at times seem hackneyed and imprecise.
Fail	59-0	Work which may make some relevant points but is inadequately focused on the specific question under discussion or (where a topic is set) fails to identify clearly the issues to be tackled, leaving the reader to draw out the implications of what is being said. The structure of the answer is likely to be dictated by the information available to the writer rather than by the requirements of the question or topic under discussion. The implications of the question or topic may have been overlooked or misunderstood.	Work in which the ideas and knowledge at the writer's disposal are presented as an end in themselves, rather than as an argument. Such argument as there is may be fragmentary or unfocussed, or may be explicitly addressed only in the opening and closing paragraphs. Linguistically as well as structurally the presentation of ideas may be rather clumsy, with points imperfectly explained. There is likely to be a sense of other people's ideas being repeated uncritically; and at worst the accretion of points may give rise to unreconciled contradictions, or raise issues which are not explored.	Work which displays a degree of knowledge sufficient to answer the question only at a relatively generalising level, in which statements are supported by trite or imprecise evidence, such as a tendency to simplify the arguments of other writers or to stumble over factual detail.

No aggregate numerical mark for the entire MSt is awarded.

Learning Support

All students are members of a College as well as of the University, and have access to the normal facilities enjoyed by full-time students including use of computers and Faculty, College, and University libraries, to which they are introduced at the beginning of year 1. Students benefit in particular from the Centre for the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations' library, which constitutes the main working collection for MSt students. This library operates a postal loans scheme for members who are resident outside Cambridge.

At the start of the course, students receive comprehensive induction to library and computing facilities, including the course's virtual learning environment.

Each student has an advisor who has oversight over her or his academic progress, gives advice on study-related matters, and communicates the feedback on the written assignments and research proposal. College Tutors for Graduates will also play a role in induction and support.

An MSt handbook, detailing course regulations, contact details and academic and general advice, is available.

Students are invited to attend lectures and events organised by the Faculty of Divinity and other relevant departments within the University.

Evaluating and Improving the quality and standards of learning

The Faculty of Divinity and the Institute of Continuing Education participate in the University's quality assurance and enhancement system. Academic management of the degree is in the hands of the MSt Sub-Committee of the Faculty of Divinity Degree Committee, which includes Faculty and Institute members. This reports to the Academic and Management committees of the Institute of Continuing Education and to the Faculty of Divinity Degree Committee. The Degree Committee reports to the Board of Graduate Studies.

- (1) **External Examining:** The MSt has an external examiner, appointed by the Faculty and the Institute, who submits a full annual report. This is considered by the MSt Sub-Committee of the Degree Committee of the Faculty of Divinity and the Institute of Continuing Education before being forwarded to the Board of Graduate Studies.
- (2) **Course Approval:** the approval of the Board of Graduate Studies and the General Board's Education Committee must be obtained before significant changes to courses are made.
- (3) **General Board Internal Review:** This is a new course, and was therefore not reviewed with the Faculty's full-time M. Phil courses on the last occasion that this took place.

All MSt students complete feedback questionnaires on the induction programme and on each of the four taught papers. The findings of these questionnaires and other feedback are discussed at course teachers' meetings. Summaries of the feedback and actions taken are made available to students via the online discussion fora.

The Faculty has a complaints procedure for graduate students to follow, in line with recommendations from the Board of Graduate Studies:

www.cam.ac.uk/cambuniv/studenthandbook/complaints/procedure/

This will be followed by the MSt.

Employment

Preparation for employment is provided in the opportunities for acquisition of relevant skills outlined earlier. See the University policy on employment skills:
www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/education/learning/employers.html

Given the nature of the degree, many of the students undertaking the MSt in the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations will already be in full or part-time employment, and may have taken the course for personal development or to enhance their skills and knowledge of the field. For some, the MSt will form part of a progression route to doctoral studies and academic careers.