

University of Cambridge: Programme Specifications

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THEOLOGICAL AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES TRIPOS

1	Awarding body	University of Cambridge
2	Teaching institution	University of Cambridge
3	Accreditation details	n/a
4	Name of final award	Bachelor of Arts
5	Programme title	Theological and Religious Studies Tripos
6	UCAS code	V600 BA/TRS
7	JACS code(s)	V600
8	Relevant QAA benchmark statement(s)	Theology and Religious Studies
9	Qualifications framework level	6 (Honours)
10	Date specification produced/ last revised	Revised April 2011
11	Date specification last reviewed	20 April 2011

Educational Aims of the Programme

The Theological and Religious Studies Tripos is taught over three years in Parts I (1st year), IIA (2nd year) and IIB (3rd year).

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 as well as one of the languages and offer five papers in total.

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 acquired 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.
- basic proficiency in another scriptural language.

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

- 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;
- an advanced proficiency in one or more scriptural languages and in the interpretation of scriptural texts; and
- basic or intermediate proficiency in another scriptural language.

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.

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.

Teaching and Learning Methods

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 teaching on an individual or small-group basis through written work and feedback thereon. Throughout the course, students are encouraged to undertake independent reading and study in order to consolidate what is being taught.

Assessment Methods

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.

Entry Requirements

A typical offer is AAA*, with an 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 about 60 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.

Indicators of Quality

QAA score 23 (2001)

RAE The Faculty of Divinity in Cambridge was ranked third in the country in the 2008 RAE in the Unit of Assessment for Theology, Divinity and Religious Studies.

Learning Support

The core teaching staff consists of 23 University Teaching Officers. In addition a wide variety of teaching and research staff from other university departments, the Centre for Advanced Religious and Theological Studies and the Colleges, and the institutions of the Cambridge Theological Federation teach in supervisions and assist with the programme of seminars and with examining.

The Faculty of Divinity has a fully equipped building on the Sidgwick Site on West Road in Cambridge which has lecture and seminar rooms, a well-stocked library with about 50,000 books, and computer facilities (including Lapwing wireless access). Students are expected to make use of the nearby University Library. Further library and computing facilities are available in the colleges.

Career Destinations

Graduates go into a wide range of careers, including academic research and teaching, full-time religious ministry, the civil service, the public sector, personnel work, media, business and management; a large proportion continue to study at PhD level.

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.