

Programme Specifications

ADVANCED DIPLOMA IN THE STUDY OF RELIGION

1	Awarding body	University of Cambridge
2	Teaching institution	University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education *
3	Accreditation details	None
4	Name of final award	Advanced Diploma in the Study of Religion
5	Programme title	Advanced Diploma in the Study of Religion
6	UCAS code	N/A
7	JACS code(s)	V620
8	Relevant QAA benchmark statement(s)	Theology and Religious Studies
9	Qualifications framework level	FHEQ Level 6 part-time
10	Date specification produced/ last revised	May 2012
11	Date specification last reviewed	2014

* Cognate Faculty endorsement provided by: Faculty of Divinity

The Undergraduate Advanced Diploma in the Study of Religion will be delivered by the University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education (ICE), as part of its credit-bearing programme at FHEQ levels 4, 5 and 6, offered to part-time adult students.

ICE 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.

The Advanced Diploma in the Study of Religion will be directed and taught by Justin Meggitt, ICE's UTO with responsibility for the study of religion, assisted where required by supervisors chosen from ICE'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 supervisors should have academic qualifications and specialised expertise in their discipline appropriate to the supervision that they are invited to undertake. Academic responsibility for monitoring the performance of individual supervisors rests with Justin Meggitt.

Programme structure

The course is a part-time named Undergraduate Advanced Diploma, equivalent to 120 credits at FHEQ level 6, the third year of an undergraduate degree and is undertaken over two years with the support and guidance of a supervisor.

Programme Overview

In the first part of the Undergraduate Advanced Diploma in the Study of Religion, the student writes two essays of 3000-4000 words. In the second part of the course, the student writes a dissertation of 10000-12000 words.

The Advanced Diploma is designed to ensure that all those undertaking it, regardless of the nature of their previous study within the discipline, are able to provide work that is built upon a solid theoretical and methodological base. The essays will assist students to gain a necessary grounding in the current, critical questions that are foundational to the study of religion, tailored to the sub-field within which they indeed to undertake research.

Programme details

Over the course of the Undergraduate Advanced Diploma in Study of Religion the student completes two essays and a dissertation.

Assignment 1: A 3000-4000 word essay on methods and issues in the study of religion.

Assignment 2: A 3000-4000 word essay on current debates in the sub-field within which they wish to undertake research.

Submission deadlines for Assignments 1 and 2 will be staggered through the first part of the course, which lasts until 1 May for students beginning the course in November and 31 July for students beginning the course in February.

Feedback on assignment 1 will be returned to the student so that it can be of benefit in the composition of essay assignment 2 but with the proviso that the marks are subject to moderation.

Dissertation: 10,000-12,000 words, to be submitted at the end of the course (1 May or 31 July of the second academic year of the course, depending on start date – e.g. a student beginning the course in November 2012 would submit their dissertation by 1 May 2014, and a student beginning in February 2013 would submit their dissertation by 31 July 2014).

The student's supervisor is assigned on the basis of the research proposal submitted by the student as part of the application process. The student decides the titles for their three assignments with guidance from their supervisor. Titles are approved by the Course Director (Justin Meggitt).

There must not be substantial overlap in material between assignments or the assignments and the Dissertation.

The first two of the six supervisions are dedicated to the student's work for assignments 1, 2 and the remaining four supervisions are dedicated to the Dissertation.

Educational aims

The Undergraduate Advanced Diploma in the Study of Religion aims to:

- provide a two 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

By the end of the Advanced Diploma, within the constraints of the course, students should be able to demonstrate:

Knowledge and understanding

- 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

Skills and other attributes

Intellectual skills

- ✧ 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.

Practical skills

- an ability to use research resources effectively
- use of IT in supporting research

Other transferable skills

- clear presentation and organisation of information
- structure, coherence, clarity and fluency in written communication
- independence of thought
- an ability to understand and evaluate arguments and ideas
- accurate representation of others' views
- an ability to reflect on one's own ideas
- an ability to identify flaws in arguments and positions, and to seek solutions
- research skills, including effective and discriminating use of resources
- an ability to work independently
- planning and time management

Teaching methods

The course will begin with a mandatory induction day including introduction and guidance to both subject specific and generic research and study skills. Teaching and learning on the course will then be delivered through a combination of six personal supervisions supplemented by communication through the Institute's virtual learning environment and progression through written formative and summative assignments. (See also Assessment Methods, below.)

Students are expected to attend all supervisions.

Times for online discussions will be arranged between the supervisor and the student.

In addition to the face-to-face supervisions, the supervisor will provide written comments on the work submitted for each supervision.

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 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 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.

Assessment methods

Students are awarded a course grade on the basis of

1. Formative assignments, all of which must be completed
2. Summative assignments and a dissertation totalling 16,000-20,000 words or their equivalent
3. Timely submission of assignments
4. Satisfactory attendance of supervisions

Students who encounter difficulties affecting their performance in one or more of the above points may submit a claim of mitigating circumstances to be considered at the end of the course.

The word length specified for the assignment(s) and dissertation is inclusive of references in the main body of the text of footnotes and endnotes but exclusive of any bibliography or list of resources consulted and of any abstract, list of contents or abbreviations that may be included at the beginning or end of the assignment.

The use of appendices is generally discouraged except where additional data, not available in published form, must be presented, and must be previously agreed with the tutor/supervisor.

The final grade will be a composite of the grades for the assignments and the dissertation, weighted 30% and 70% respectively. However, it is necessary to achieve an overall pass for the summative assignments to progress to the dissertation.

The formative assignments in the Undergraduate Advanced Diploma in the Study of Religion involve preparing the material for the assignments and, in particular the Dissertation. Before each supervision the student submits work, as agreed with their supervisor, and that work forms the basis of the supervision.

Formative assignments are geared towards the direction of the student's summative work. The nature of these assignments will be specified in the Course Specification project. In the case of the Dissertation they will involve such activities as a literature review as well as drafts of chapters that will form the final project.

Entry and/or progression requirement

Applicants seeking entry to ICE courses at FHEQ level 6 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, a Diploma 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 the conditions for their entry to the course.

Students who have completed an Undergraduate Advanced Diploma to an appropriate standard may be able to progress to Master's degrees but would need to follow the standard admissions procedures for any such programme of study.

Credit awarded by the Institute can be transferred into the degree programmes of some 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.

The Undergraduate Advanced Diploma in the Study of Religion is targeted at students who:

- wish to gain a qualification at Level 3 (FHEQ 6) in Religious Studies.
- seek entry to a Master's degree but who are not yet appropriately qualified.
- are engaged in working, directly or indirectly, in fields where the critical study of religion is significant, 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;

Student support

Academic advice to students taking ICE courses is available both before and after they have registered for a course: first, from the appropriate member of the academic staff (in this case Justin Meggitt) and, once the course has begun, at the induction day and also from their appointed supervisor. Communication channels with academic staff and with fellow students are provided by the ICE virtual learning environment, which also holds generic and subject specific learning resources. Students have borrowing rights in the University Library and can access the library's online resources. They also have borrowing rights at 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, and the Cambridge Theological Federation. 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.

Administrative enquiries are dealt with by Academic Programme Managers.

All students are provided at the start of a course with access to the *ICE Student Handbook*.

Graduate employability and career destinations

Students completing the Undergraduate Advanced Diploma in the Study of Religion 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, listed above under **Learning Outcomes**.

Management of teaching quality and standards

The teaching quality and standards of the course will be monitored throughout by the appropriate member of academic staff (in this case Justin Meggitt), who will report annually to the Subject Moderation Panel, consisting of the internal assessor, University and external examiners and other Faculty and ICE members as agreed by the Education Committee. The report of the moderating External Examiner is made available to all students on the course via the Institute's virtual learning environment.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this programme specification. At the time of publication, the programme specification has been approved by the relevant Faculty Board (or equivalent). Programme specifications are reviewed annually, however, during the course of the academic year, any approved changes to the programme will be communicated to enrolled students through email notification or publication in the Reporter. The relevant faculty or department will endeavour to update the programme specification accordingly, and prior to the start of the next academic year.

Further information about specifications and an archive of programme specifications for all awards of the University is available online at: www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/camdata/archive.html