

Programme Specification 2021-22

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN THEOLOGY, RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Awarding body	University of Cambridge
Teaching institution	Faculty of Divinity
Accreditation details	None
Name of final award	Master of Philosophy
Programme title	Theology, Religion and Philosophy of Religion
HECoS code(s)	100794 (theology and religious studies)
Relevant QAA benchmark statement(s)	None
Qualifications framework level	7 (Masters)
Date specification was produced	September 2022

The MPhil programme lasts over nine months (October to June inclusive).

Educational Aims of the Programme

The course aims:

- i) to provide advanced teaching and training in research to postgraduate 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, particularly training in academic research.

On completion of the MPhil students should have acquired

- 1 an introduction to research methods and skills appropriate to a chosen sub-discipline of the subject, such as will serve both
 - as a preparation for more advanced research
 - as offering skills of value to potential employers;
- 2 more advanced and specialised knowledge of some fundamental issues and literatures at the forefront of research in that sub-discipline;
- 3 the ability to construct a substantive, if preliminary, contribution to research on a particular issue within that sub-discipline, through the writing of a dissertation.

The subject areas currently available for study at M.Phil level are: Anglican Studies, Christian Theology, New Testament and Early Christianity, Old Testament, Philosophy of Religion, Religion and Conflict, Religions of Late Antiquity Study of World Religions and World Christianities.

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 effectively 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 study at Ph.D. level.
- iii) **Practical Skills:** use of the libraries and other bibliographical resources, 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; IT skills (email, computer and internet use; use of bibliographical software); 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 fortnightly seminars of one and a half or two hours in the Faculty which relate to the above sub-disciplines; by weekly classes in one or more languages and/or an 'exercise' such as palaeography; and by supervisions which provide individual teaching 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 supervisions for essays, and in the feedback on them. Summative assessment includes three-hour examinations, the submission of essays or other written projects, and a dissertation.

Candidates must complete the following:

1. Either one three-hour written language examination; or an exercise approved by the Degree Committee.
2. Two essays (of not more than 5,000 words) or equivalent exercises.
3. A thesis of between 15,000 and 20,000 words.

Examiners may also choose to request an oral examination in any aspect of the work submitted by the candidate.

Entry Requirements

Admission is based on high achievement in a previous degree which should normally be a B.A. in Theology, Religion and Philosophy of Religion or a cognate discipline within the Humanities (preferably including elements of Theological and Religious Studies).

Learning Support

The core teaching staff consists of 24 University Teaching Officers. In addition a wide variety of teaching and research staff from other university departments 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 60,000 books, and computer facilities (including Lapwing and Eduroam wireless access and printing and scanning facilities). Students are expected to make use of the nearby University Library. Further library and computing facilities are available in the colleges.

Management of Teaching Quality and Standards

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

- i) the Degree Committee which oversees admission to the course, student progress and examinations;
- ii) the MPhil Director, who answers to the Degree Committee;
- iii) scrutiny of the reports of External Examiners by the Faculty and the Board of Graduate Studies. Suggestions by them for improvement are acted on where necessary;
- iv) student feedback through lecture and course questionnaires (including national surveys);
- v) student participation in the Subject Committees and the Faculty Board;
- vi) appraisal and evaluation of staff, and the provision of staff development programmes; and
- vii) the General Board's programme for reviewing Faculties and Departments every six years.

Graduate Employability and Career Destinations

MPhil 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.

The Careers Service maintains links with relevant employers and takes into account employer needs and opinions in the services which it provides for students. The Careers Service also allocates a Careers Adviser to each College, Faculty and Department to act as a point of contact.

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 academical 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 academical year.

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