



The University of Edinburgh

Programme Specification for: M.A. in Religious Studies and English Literature with Honours¹

- 1) **Awarding Institution: University of Edinburgh**
- 2) **Teaching Institution: University of Edinburgh**
- 3) **Programme accredited by: N/A**
- 4) **Final Award: M.A. Honours**
- 5) **Programme Title: Religious Studies and English Literature**
- 6) **UCAS Code: VQ63**
Relevant QAA Subject Benchmarking Group(s): Theology and Religious Studies
- 7) **Postholder with overall responsibility for QA: Head of School**
- 8) **Date of production/revision: June 2012**
- 9) **External Summary**

The combination of Religious Studies and English Literature is concerned with all aspects of the interpretation of religion and literature and with theories and methodologies for studying religion and literature. At Edinburgh this programme proceeds from a comparative and non-confessional perspective based on the principle that religions and literatures influence many if not most human endeavours for good or ill. Working and learning with international scholars, students study theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of religion and to the study of literature, along with developing an understanding of the main phenomena of religion, such as belief systems, rituals, mythology and iconography, and understanding the main genres and interpretive practices of English literature.

The programme in Religious Studies and English Literature at Edinburgh allows students to develop:

- knowledge and understanding of the histories, practices and cultural expressions of religious traditions and literary traditions;
- skills in collecting, analysing and interpreting a wide range of sources including field studies, written texts, oral traditions and testimonies of adherents;
- ability to evaluate and critique work from a range of methods appropriate to Religious Studies and English literature, and also from adjacent disciplines such as Anthropology, Sociology, Philosophy, Linguistics, etc ;
- ability to formulate research questions and develop arguments which represent different attitudes and positions fairly;
- ability to engage with views different from their own and to express ideas and arguments clearly, both orally, in writing and using electronic media.
- ability to prepare written texts for a range of audiences – peer, semi-formal, academic, popular; skills in working with others, with a range of backgrounds and knowledge.

¹ The information contained in this Programme Specification should be used as a guide to the content of a degree programme and should not be interpreted as a contract.

10) Educational aims of programme:

Both English Literature and Religious Studies are concerned with literary texts of various kinds and how they are read, interpreted and transmitted within and amongst a variety of audiences. Students within this joint degree programme will engage intensively with a variety of texts and interpretive practices within both artistic-literary traditions and within religious traditions, examine their cross-over, and assess theories of literary production and religious formation across the two disciplinary fields.

By combining English Literature and Religious Studies, the programme aims:

- to identify and differentiate a variety of types of text, both 'literary' and 'religious'
- to appreciate the complexity of issues involved in reading texts of many kinds;
- to study different forms and styles of interpretation of texts;
- to examine 'religious' elements and aspects in 'nonreligious' forms of English literature;
- to provide cross-disciplinary intellectual tools for investigation, understanding and critical evaluation of the interaction between literature and religion;
- to develop the general critical, analytical and communicative skills which prepare students for a wide variety of employment opportunities and for continued life-long learning.

11) Programme outcomes:

11a) Knowledge and understanding

The programme has the following outcomes for all students:

- to introduce students to the complex and diverse structures and functions of religions and literatures;
- to provide students of religions with an understanding of how such variation can be and has been approached through various interpretative models and theories;
- to allow students to engage productively with the research literature on interactions between religions, literatures and society in the present and the past;
- to equip students with the knowledge and practical and theoretical skills to carry out independent research;
- to enable students to develop communication skills, initiative, professionalism and the ability to work independently as well as with others.

11b) Graduate attributes: Skills and abilities in Research and Enquiry

By engaging with and completing the degree in Religious Studies and English Literature, graduates will be able to:

- engage critically with texts, ideas and arguments;
- be able to differentiate primary from secondary sources in both disciplines;
- relate data to theory;
- evaluate and critique the work of scholars in both disciplines, both in the contemporary period and in their respective historical development;
- formulate questions emerging from the field of study and structure an argument to express resolutions to the questions critically and analytically. This is brought together in an extended and complex piece of work in the final dissertation;
- read and interpret a range of different sources within their historical, social and theoretical contexts;
- appreciate the challenges and the possibilities of interdisciplinary research.

11c) Graduate Attributes: Skills and abilities in Personal and Intellectual Autonomy

By engaging with and completing the degree in Religious Studies and English Literature, graduates will be able to:

- organise complex and lengthy arguments and draw these together into a coherent conclusion;
- summarise, interpret and critique the work of others by competent use of major theoretical perspectives and concepts in English Literature and in the Study of Religions;
- compare different sets of evidence to reach conclusions, using historical texts and documentation for diachronic understanding (that is, changes in interpretation over time) or by studying contemporary interpretations in various cultural settings reflecting a synchronic understanding (that is, interpretive practices at a specified period of time);
- analyse and explain how religion and literature are shaped by and interact with their social, cultural and physical environments;
- formulate, investigate and discuss questions informed by a variety of theories and methodologies in Religious Studies and English Literature;
- engage and draw on an understanding of religious traditions and cultures and literary production to inform the approach taken when dealing with views different from one's own;
- analyse and explain how cultural assumptions impact on the interpretation of religions and literatures
- reflect on the influence of religions and literatures and apply this to a variety of practical situations: public, personal and professional.

11d) Graduate Attributes: Skills and abilities in Communication

By engaging with and completing the degree in Religious Studies and English Literature, graduates will be able to:

- formulate a coherent written, electronic or oral presentation on the basis of material gathered and organised independently on a given topic;
- express clearly ideas and arguments, both orally and in writing and in electronic media;
- use group discussions and joint seminar presentations to research and present work collaboratively;
- develop oral presentation and participation skills during seminars and group-work, and in written form through online blogs and other e- learning tools, dissertations and essays.

11e) Graduate Attributes: Skills and abilities in Personal Effectiveness

By engaging with and completing the degree in Religious Studies and English Literature, graduates will be able to:

- collaborate efficiently and productively with others in the process of learning and presenting conclusions – this includes those with a range of backgrounds and knowledge bases about religions and literatures, such as fellow-students, tutors and supervisors;
- organise their own learning, manage workload and work to a timetable;
- effectively plan, and possess the confidence to undertake and to present scholarly work that demonstrates an understanding of the aims, methods and theoretical considerations relevant to this joint programme; and
- work independently on the creation of essays and research based dissertations using the standards current in the academic fields of Religious Studies and English Literature.

11f) Technical/practical skills

Not applicable

12) Programme structure and features

Full details of course structures are given in the appropriate sections of the Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study.

The degree programme is taken on a full-time basis over four years. Courses (worth 20 credits) are taught for a total of eleven weeks. In years one and two teaching is largely lecture-based, augmented by small group tutorials. Honours teaching is largely seminar based in small group classes. Assessment is variable but is normally one in course essay and other course work (blogs, tutorial sheets, presentations etc), making up 40% of the final mark and one two hour exam at the end of the course, making up 60% of the final mark.

In years 1 and 2, students must choose courses at SQCF Level 8 and in each year take core courses in both Religious Studies (40 credits) and in English Literature (40 credits). The remaining 40 credits in each year may be taken within the School of Divinity or as 'outside' courses. In year 3, students must choose option courses at SQCF Level 10 in Religious Studies (40 credits) and in English Literature (40 credits). The remaining 40 credits can be taken in either subject area. In year 4, students must choose option courses at SQCF Level 10 in Religious Studies (40 credits) and in English Literature (40 credits) and a dissertation (40 credits) in either subject. Entry to year 3 requires passes in specified subjects and students should refer to the Degree Programme Table for further information.

Details of courses offered each year in Religious Studies are available on the School of Divinity's website. Similarly courses offered in English Literature are available on LLC's website.

Through the School's quality assurance and enhancement procedures the teaching and learning processes are closely monitored; this includes feedback from students through staff/student liaison meetings and course monitoring forms.

The School has adopted a policy on Equality, Diversity and Respect in the School of Divinity covering all students and staff in the School.

13) Teaching and Learning Methods and Strategies

Teaching and Learning strategies employed at the University of Edinburgh consist of a variety of different methods appropriate to the programme aims. The graduate attributes listed above are met through a teaching and learning framework (detailed below) which is appropriate to the level and content of the course.

Teaching and Learning Activities

In Year 1

Lectures

Tutorials

One to one meetings with lecturers/personal tutors.

In Year 2

Lectures

Tutorials

One to one meetings with lecturers/personal tutors.

In Year 3

Seminars

One to one meetings with lecturers/personal tutors.

In Year 4

Seminars

One to one meetings with lecturers/personal tutors.

Innovative Learning Week

The University of Edinburgh Innovative Learning Week is scheduled in Week 6 of Semester 2. During this week 'normal' teaching is suspended which provides space outwith the curriculum for

staff and students to explore new learning activities. Some examples of the types of activities held in the School of Divinity were workshops on public speaking skills, debates, trips to places of significant religious interest and viewings of religious artefacts and paintings.

14) Assessment Methods and Strategies

Assessment

Courses can be assessed by a diverse range of methods and often takes the form of formative work which provides the student with on-going feedback as well as summative assessment which is submitted for credit.

In Year 1

Class Tests
Oral Presentations
Participation in tutorials
Weekly tutorial sheets
Blogs
Essays
Written Examinations (seen and unseen)

In Year 2

Class Tests
Oral Presentations
Participation in tutorials
Weekly tutorial sheets
Blogs
Essays
Written Examinations (seen and unseen)

In Year 3

Oral Presentations
Participation
Blogs
Essays
Written Examinations (seen and unseen)

In Year 4

Oral Presentations
Participation
Blogs
Essays
Written Examinations (seen and unseen)
Dissertation

15) Career Opportunities

Graduates in Religious Studies and English Literature will develop skills suitable for a variety of careers including the voluntary sector, counselling, finance, management, banking, the Civil Service and human resources. You may also choose to continue your studies at Edinburgh or an other institution or pursue a career in teaching or research.

16) Other Items

All students will be assigned a Personal Tutor on admission to the degree programme.

Students in the programme have access to the School of Divinity's excellent computing facilities. Their studies are supported by very good holdings in all areas of English literature in the University's main library, and by New College library, one of the most extensive Religious Studies university library collections in the UK.

More information about the School of Divinity can be found at <http://www.div.ed.ac.uk>

More information about the Department of English Literature can be found at
<http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/literatures-languages-cultures/english-literature>