Programme Specification

Programme award and title: BACHELOR OF ARTS WITH HONOURS IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES AND X SUBJECT

UCAS code: VARIOUS

SCQF Qualification Level: 10 SCQF Credit Value: 484

Educational aims of the programme:
Concise (e.g. a few sentences), general statement of aims and broad purposes of the programme

Students may take Religious Studies in a wide range of degree programmes. The curriculum is designed to meet the needs of a variety of students, from those for whom Religious Studies forms a major component of their programmes, to those who may study the subject for only one or a few semesters. A key educational aim is thus to provide flexibility and choice, enabling students to adjust their programme of studies while balancing this with the need to maintain coherence within the subjects studied. In consonance with this latter aim, the Religious Studies combined honours programme provides a coherent, structured path to the final degree. The combined honours Religious Studies aims to provide students with a grounding in the subject through core modules, whilst allowing specialisation through the choice of optional modules and the dissertation. The programme also aims to promote the teaching and learning of transferable, communication, self-management, interpersonal and academic skills.

Religious Studies provision at the University of Stirling aims to stimulate curiosity about religious cultures, enable in-depth study of at least some sacred texts, practices and theologies in a variety of religious traditions, explore the interface between what constitutes 'religious' and what is variously defined as political, ethical, aesthetic or creative aspects of different global communities. By adopting this focus we aim to open up awareness of plurality and difference within societies and within religious traditions, foster empathetic engagement with both familiar and unfamiliar viewpoints, promote self critical awareness of presuppositions and encourage constructive and critical analysis and argument and an awareness of the possibility of change.

Intended programme learning outcomes:
Outline (e.g. one or two paragraphs) of what the student will know, understand and be able to do as a result of their learning, expressed in the categories below. Please consider the contribution made to the student's personal development planning (PDP) and future employability.

Knowledge and understanding
The intended learning outcomes of the Religious Studies programmes, in line with the benchmarking statement for Theology and Religious Studies, are:

To develop a critical understanding of key concepts, theoretical approaches and values of Religious Studies.

To develop knowledge of the histories, theologies and practices of major religious traditions such as Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. This may involve a degree of knowledge of the relevant languages.

To develop a theoretical imaginaire which can be filled out with a variety of contents and generate informed questions.

To develop the ability to discriminate and the ability to see connections.

In terms both of the development of practices of critical thinking and of a specialised knowledge of important aspects of cultural diversity students of Religious Studies are thus particularly well equipped to address the problematics of difference and thus to help develop relevant practices of negotiation.

Subject-specific skills and other attributes
Subject-specific intellectual and practical skills are inevitably connected with the knowledge and understanding of the subject, but many are also transferable and some are key-life skills. The development of skills of information handling, critical analysis and presentation inherent in subject specific knowledge practices related to cultural diversity and the problematics of difference, for example, are clearly of benefit in any form of work or life situation in which students will be required to articulate, assess or otherwise deal with the competing claims of different perspectives, lifestyles or systems of value.
The core skills that Religious Studies students are expected to develop and which the combined degree course facilitates are:

- Literacy
- The critical analysis of key cultural texts
- Research skills such as the gathering and interpretation of data
- The ability to argue rationally
- Library and IT skills

Generic skills (e.g., information skills, communication skills, critical, analytical and problem-solving abilities) and other attributes
Generic skills of this kind are clearly widely applicable and valuable both as attributes desirable to future employers and as important life skills.

Communication Skills
- Communication in group work
- Making class presentations
- Essay writing
- Clear oral and written expression

Self-Management Skills
- Planning
- Applying study skills
- Organising academic work
- Working under pressure
- Time management
- Meeting deadlines

Interpersonal Skills
- Interaction in group work
- Leadership
- Listening
- Sensitivity

**Learning, teaching and assessment strategies:**
Outline (e.g. one or two paragraphs) on overall approach taken to develop and assess learning outcomes, including any distinctive features

To achieve the learning outcomes specified, Religious Studies has developed teaching and learning strategies that draw on a variety of methods of assessment. Religious Studies uses teaching methods appropriate to the development of students’ knowledge and skills.

The First Year
The first year core modules (REL911, Religion, Ethics and Society and REL912 Religion, Colonialism & Nationalism) have large student numbers. Lectures are used to introduce students to key issues and concepts such as postcolonialism or the problematics of representation and to guide their independent reading which is an essential part of the learning process. Feedback questionnaires are used to assess the effectiveness of lectures for this purpose. Lectures are complemented by seminars at which students present papers and/or a particular reading or questions focussed on a particular reading are discussed. Due to the large numbers in groups in the first year, some lecturers break up the larger groups into smaller, working groups to focus on a particular set of questions during a seminar. The groups then return to the plenary group to share points of understanding. This method of facilitating group discussion is very effective.

The Second Year
The second year consolidates and develops the skills introduced in the first year. Here we have the core modules REL913, Leaders and Founders and REL914 Theory & Method, a level 9 Module which begins to develop and intensify students' knowledge and understanding of key theories and methodologies specific to Religious Studies.

The Third Year
The third year contains a core module, REL9C5 which further develops an understanding of the essentially colonial/postcolonial contest within which the subject is constructed and understood and REL9C6 Religion and Theory, that further builds on the previous programmes. dealing with Religion in terms of critical theories and methodologies. At the same time there is scope for students to take optional level 10 modules in Religious Studies.
some of which have a greater bias towards the representation of religious traditions.

The Fourth Year
The fourth year offers students a range of further level 10 optional modules to take in conjunction with their other chosen subject(s). There is an optional dissertation (REL9ZX) which is typically undertaken in semester 8 and which takes the value of two level 10 Modules. There is a programme of seminars aimed to develop research skills and students are encouraged to develop their own independent research. Each dissertation student is supervised by a member of staff. This is a major opportunity for students to carry out self-directed work on a topic of their own choosing, although in consultation with the potential supervisor. Staged deadlines and feedback from the dissertation co-ordinators and individual supervisors help provide a framework for students’ own work.

Optional Modules
Optional modules are available from Semester 4 onwards (examples detailed in Section XI). The optional modules complement the core programme and comprise modules on major traditions (Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam) along with modules on areas of staff specialism. One pathway to the degree that a student could create through Religious Studies modules is in ‘eastern’ traditions through building modules in Hindu, Buddhist, and Japanese traditions and through two Sanskrit modules. Many staff teach options in their areas of research interest where this fits the overall curriculum design. This enables students to engage with recent scholarship in particular fields.

Assessment and Feedback
Assessment and feedback are detailed in the Religious Studies Student Handbook Section. All courses are assessed either by coursework or by coursework and examination. Oral seminar presentations are assessed within almost all modules, contributing to the final Module mark. Religion in the School receives feedback from students via online Module questionnaires and through the student-staff consultative committee.

Reference Points
The following reference points were used in creating the programme specifications:
- Staff research
- Benchmark statements provided by the Theology and Religious Studies benchmarking group.
- University learning and teaching policies.

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