



Subject Benchmark Statement: Theology and Religious Studies

The Basics

This document is a summary of the Subject Benchmark Statement for Theology and Religious Studies (TRS). It is specifically designed to provide a short and accessible overview of the main Statement for students, employers and academics. It is not intended to replace or alter the Subject Benchmark Statement, which should be referred to in the design and approval of courses and when any further detail is required.

Subject Benchmark Statements describe the nature of study and the benchmark academic standards expected of graduates in specific subject areas, and in respect of particular qualifications. They provide a picture of what graduates in a particular subject might reasonably be expected to know, do and understand at the end of their course or programme.

Subject Benchmark Statements are presented in four sections. Section 1 outlines the contextual information - providing the operational landscape, and boundaries, of subject discipline. This includes consideration of the ways in which the discipline addresses wider social goals, specifically in relation to: equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI); the requirements of disabled students; education for sustainable development (ESD); and enterprise and entrepreneurship.

Section 2 covers distinctive features of the course, including curriculum design, partnership arrangements, flexibility of delivery, progression and ongoing monitoring processes. Section 3 explains any features relevant to teaching, learning and assessment activities for the subject. Section 4 describes the benchmark standards of achievement reached by all graduates with a bachelor's degree with honours in the subject, with some subjects also including achievement at master's level.



Why study a degree in Theology and Religious Studies?

Courses in the TRS area promote critical understanding and analysis of religion/religions in a global context. They are vital for understanding, navigating and changing a world shaped in complex and diverse ways by religion and spirituality, and in which religious identities and diversity are constantly being negotiated. They enable critical examination of, relation to, and participation in religious cultures, communities and institutions, and in the societies shaped by them.

Courses within this area are often offered by general higher education providers, open to students of any religious or non-religious identity. They are also offered by providers with specific religious stances, offering courses for a variety of formational and training purposes – for example, training people for ministry in a religious community, or for chaplaincy work (single faith or multi-faith). Because of the embeddedness of religion and spirituality in society and culture at large, there may be significant overlaps and synergies between courses within TRS and courses in subjects such as law, philosophy, social science, politics, classics, literature, archaeology, international relations, business (ethical finance), art, peace studies and medicine.

The study of TRS contributes to community understanding and development, and the avoidance or challenging of prejudices arising from misinformation or misunderstanding. It can ensure that debates in the UK and beyond about matters of religion are well informed and of high quality, and based on competent religious literacy. The fact that TRS graduates go into a wide variety of careers means that there is a pool of citizens with a sophisticated understanding of religion, able to contribute to debate in many areas of society. Such understanding can contribute to discussion of topics including international relations, community relations, human rights, social justice, wealth disparity, sustainability, climate change and the impact of the digital revolution.



What are the main teaching and learning approaches in theology and religious studies?

Courses in the TRS area employ a wide variety of teaching and learning methods, including case studies, fieldwork, language classes, lectures and presentations in a variety of media, projects (individual or group), reading (and accessing electronic information sources) with appropriate guidance, study placements and workshops.

Most courses within TRS include engagement with and response to contemporary issues and culture. This might include global perspectives, environmental change, the disparity between poverty and wealth, and inter-religious and intra-religious relations. It can involve opportunities to engage critically with gender, feminist, queer, Black, disability, postcolonial and liberationist studies within the context of widening cultural horizons, postmodernity, pluralism and globalisation.



How are students assessed?

All courses within TRS involve assessment. Students are asked to undertake a variety of tasks designed to enable them to develop and display a wide range of skills or literacies. The quality of their achievement of these tasks is assessed, and they receive feedback to help them develop. During their course, the completion of these tasks, and the receipt of feedback, will enable them to progress through the various levels of study. As they progress, students are encouraged to develop greater ability to work independently, especially by undertaking extended essays, longer projects or dissertations. Guidance for all assignments is provided in the form of clear descriptions of the activities involved and of the criteria for assessment, recommendations for learning resources of various kinds, and academic advice from tutors. The assessment of TRS courses includes a mix of methods that are accessible to all students.

Where individual students may be disadvantaged by particular assessment methods, adjustments to those assessments are considered while ensuring fairness across the full cohort. The procedures used for assessment cover the subject knowledge, abilities and skills developed through the degree course.



Benchmark Standards

The minimum threshold standards that a student will have demonstrated when they are awarded an honours degree in Theology and Religious Studies are outlined on **pages 16–18** of the Subject Benchmark Statement. The vast majority of students will perform significantly better than the minimum threshold standards. Each higher education provider has its own method of determining what appropriate evidence of this achievement will be and should refer to [Annex D: Outcome classification descriptions for FHEQ Level 6 and FQHEIS Level 10 degrees](#). This Annex sets out common descriptions of the four main degree outcome classifications for bachelor's degrees with honours: 1st, 2:1, 2:2 and 3rd. Study at master's level requires higher level skills, with students expected to achieve according to the descriptor for a higher education qualification at Level 7 on the FHEQ and SCQF Level 11 on the FQHEIS. The Statement was developed by a group of subject experts drawn from across the sector. Details of the Advisory Group can be found on **page 20** of the Statement.

Read the full Subject Benchmark Statement

The [full Subject Benchmark Statement](#) is available on the QAA website.



Subject Benchmark Statements are published in QAA's capacity as a membership organisation on behalf of the higher education sector.

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