**Programme specification**

**MA Contemporary Religion**

**School:** Humanities, Religion and Philosophy  
**Entry in:** September 2018  
**Awarding Institution:** York St John University  
**Teaching Institution:** York St John University  
**Delivery Location:** York St John University  
**Programme/s Accredited by:** Not applicable  
**Exit Awards:** Postgraduate Certificate Contemporary Religion  
Postgraduate Diploma Contemporary Religion  
**UCAS Code / GTTR / Other:** Not applicable  
**Joint Honours Combinations:** Not applicable  
**QAA Benchmark Group(s):** Theology & Religious Studies  
**Mode/s of Study:** Full-time for 1 year  
Part-time for 2 years  
**Language of Study:** English

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**Introduction and Special Features**

This programme offers you the chance to develop your academic and professional skills by studying specific aspects of contemporary religion at an advanced level. The emphasis is on developing, employing and assessing those skills, as much as on the content of knowledge as such.

The taught elements of the programme will be delivered during the day and will include up to three subject-based modules. You also have the option of including up to two modules from our MA Theology and Ministry, so you will have considerable choice in how you shape the programme to meet your particular interests or needs.

There are two routes through the programme:

**The Research Route** is designed for students whose focus is mainly academic research, and who are likely to want to go on to study at doctoral level. You will receive training in doing research at postgraduate level, and your degree will comprise two subject-based taught modules, the research skills module, and a substantial research dissertation.

**The Professional Route** is designed for students who may not necessarily want to go on to an academic career, but who want to develop their academic skills and professional practice. You will develop a small project related to religion in society, which you may use as part of a dissertation-based research project. You will be taught skills of project management and reflective practice and your degree will comprise three subject-based taught modules, the professional skills module, and a dissertation.

The programme can be completed in a year of full-time study, or in two years of part-time study. It is taught on two days during the week, with the option of taking some modules from the evening-taught MA Theology and Ministry programme in Terms 1 and 2.
Admissions Criteria

In addition to the University's general entry criteria for postgraduate study, you must have an upper second-class or first-class honours degree (or equivalent). This can be in any subject, though priority will be given to students with degrees in humanities and especially in theology or religious studies.

Applicants with a lower second-class degree and knowledge of theology and/or religious studies may be accepted onto the programme following an interview. This includes applicants who may have a lower second-class degree in another subject area and who have evidence of having studied theology or religious studies at certificate or diploma level (for example as part of ministry training).

If your first language is not English, you need to take an IELTS test or an equivalent qualification accepted by the University (see https://www.yorks.j.ac.uk/international/how-to-apply/english-language-requirements/). You must pass at 6.5 or higher in all four aspects of the test (listening, reading, speaking and writing).

Associate Student entry route

If you do not qualify for direct entry to the programme you might be offered enrolment as an associate student on a single module taught over one term. This depends on your qualifications and experience, and how you do on your interview. If you are accepted as an associate student you will be given extra support by your module tutor and help in preparing the assignment. Students who successfully pass the module may enrol on the MA programme in the following September, and transfer their credit automatically. Associate students can only register for a single module, and therefore this is not a suitable entry for full-time students, including international students.

International students

International students will be admitted through the procedures of York St John International, according to the prevailing University and programme rules.

Accredited Prior Experience and Learning (APEL)

Candidates for a Masters award with suitable prior learning or experience may be exempt from up to two of the optional taught modules (60 credits). Normal university rules for credit transfer will apply, and you will need to demonstrate that your learning matches the requirements of some parts of the programme. Applications based on experience will need to be evidenced by a portfolio, and you will be charged for portfolio assessment. APEL will not be given towards the award of Postgraduate Certificate or Postgraduate Diploma. For more information see the University policy document: Accredited Prior (Experiential) Learning (APL/APEL).

Disclosure and Barring Service

Students on the professional route are required to do a project that may involve working with an outside agency. This may be using their existing workplace, or a religious organisation. Where this is likely to put the student in contact with children or vulnerable adults, they may be required to arrange clearance with DBS through the university or placement provider.

Programme Aims

1. To enable students to gain advanced skills in the study of contemporary religion or in professional practice that are related to the nature and role of religion in societies.
2. To offer students the opportunity to study in depth particular topics related to the expression and understanding of religion in contemporary societies.
3. To develop the ability of students to study and research independently, at an advanced level, specific questions within the area of contemporary religion.
Programme Learning Outcomes

Level 7 / FHEQ L7
All students who complete the programme successfully will:
1. have advanced skills in studying particular aspects of contemporary religion through independent enquiry, working with peers, and engaging selectively and critically with a range of primary and secondary material from traditional and online sources;
2. have systematic knowledge and critical understanding of how various aspects of religion are understood in different contexts and discourses, including good understanding of methodological and hermeneutical issues related to the discipline;
3. be able to communicate the results of study concisely in ways appropriate to the discipline, showing awareness and critical understanding of the complexities of issues and the ability to reflect critically on their own particular standpoint where appropriate;
4. be able to devise, plan and execute a research project demonstrating awareness of ethical issues, critical distance from sources, and the ability think independently and creatively.

Students who complete the research route will in addition:
5. be able to devise and propose a viable research project within the discipline, using critical evaluation of existing literature to suggest clear research questions and how these can be answered using appropriate methods;
6. produce a sustained piece of writing that adheres to specific instructions to authors and demonstrates the ability to communicate effectively within a particular academic discourse;
7. be able to present the results of research to an audience of peers in a style appropriate to an academic conference in the discipline.

Students who complete the professional route will in addition:
5. be able to devise and manage projects that enhance religion-based activity in particular contexts;
6. be able to integrate theory and practice in critically reflective ways that show awareness and sensitivity to issues related to religion in contemporary society;
7. be able to engage peers in an act of critical reflection in relation to a specific issue of contemporary religion.

Programme Structure
There are two routes through the programme and you must choose one when you enrol or within the first three weeks of starting the programme:

1. Research route. You must take the 30-credit Researching Religion module (delivered over three terms), two 30-credit option modules (normally one in Term 1 and one in Term 2), and dissertation modules amounting to 90 credits.

2. Professional route. You must take the 30-credit Professional Development module (delivered over three terms), three 30-credit option modules over two terms, and a 60-credit dissertation.

Which of the 30-credit option modules are delivered in normal teaching hours will depend on staff availability and student demand, and so they may vary from year to year. There are normally two taught modules offered in each term. You can take up to two evening-delivered modules shared with the MA Theology & Ministry programme.
## Teaching, Learning and Assessment

The programme will aim to create opportunities for you to interact with tutors, peers and the subject area in ways that allow you to pursue your own goals and interests. You will be expected to be proactive in shaping the way that you use the programme to achieve your learning objectives.

The **Professional Development** module is linked to project-based work with an external organisation that runs for 10 weeks. You can use your existing contacts or workplace to set up a project, or we can help you organise one. Projects need to be small and not overly ambitious, given that you will be expected to work on them for around 5 hours a week over 10 weeks. The sorts of things you might do include planning and organising special acts of worship, changes to worship spaces, social events, study courses etc. Although most projects are likely to work with faith-based organisations, there is scope for students to work with secular organisations on projects related to religion. Examples in the department in recent years have included working with prisons and working on religious display materials for museums.
Teaching will come in different forms which can be roughly grouped according to module type:

**Skills modules** (Researching Religion and Professional Development) will employ a 'hands on' approach by getting you to do short tasks and exercises in class and between sessions. Some of these will be linked to the taught modules for full time students. You will learn by having to work out how to solve problems and find the information you need in a guided and supported environment.

**Taught modules** will introduce you to relevant ideas and key theoretical frameworks, exposing you to current research, and helping you to develop independence of thought and self-directed learning. Teaching will involve some lecturing but also extended discussions and debates.

**Research modules** (dissertations) will be supervised by someone with knowledge in the topic. This kind of teaching offers in-depth individual tutoring that will guide your work on a particular research project.

**Assessment**
A variety of assessment will be used in this programme to reflect the range of skills and tasks required by researchers and professionals in the discipline. The distinction between learning and assessment is less clear at masters level because so much of the learning that takes place is in the process of producing assignments. This programme will deliberately use assessment not simply to see if you know something or can do something, but also as a means of enabling you to learn.

Methods of assessment will include:
1. Written assignments for taught modules and independent studies.
2. Dissertations.
3. Proposals.
4. Portfolios.
5. Presentations.

Informal feedback (i.e. comment on work that does not include a pass/fail assessment or mark) will be offered in a variety of ways according to the module. For most modules this will be comments on drafts of essays, but for some it might be verbal feedback on class presentations or class exercises. Feedback will also be given as part of the required assessments which are specified for each module.

### Progression and Graduation Requirements

The University’s [general regulations for postgraduate awards](#) apply to this programme.

Any modules that must be passed for progression or award are indicated in the Programme Structure section.

In addition, the following programme-specific regulations apply in respect of exit awards and graduation:

- For the Postgraduate Certificate Contemporary Religion, credit must comprise two 30-credit Contemporary Religion modules (excluding MCR009 Independent Study).
- For the Postgraduate Diploma Contemporary Religion, credit must comprise at least three 30-credit Contemporary Religion modules (one of which could be MCR009 Independent Study).
- For the MA Contemporary Religion, credit must comprise at least two Contemporary Religion modules (neither of which can be MCR009 Independent Study) and either MCR011 and MCR012 Dissertation Parts 1 & 2 (Research Route) or MCR010 Dissertation (Professional Route).
## Internal and External Reference Points

This programme specification was formulated with reference to:

- **University Mission Statement** [see page two]
- **Strategic Plan 2015-20** [see page four]
- **Framework for Higher Education Qualifications**
- **Master's degree characteristics (QAA 2010)**
- **Theology and religious studies benchmarks (QAA 2007)**
- Theology and religious studies M-Level benchmarks (QAA draft 2013)

## Further Information

Further information on the programme of study may be obtained from:

- Admissions entry profile (Admissions)
- Programme validation document (Registry – Academic Quality Support)
- Regulations (Registry – Academic Quality Support)
- Student programme handbook (school)
- Module handbooks (school)

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*Date written / revised: 02/06/14, July 2017*

*Mode of study amended by Registry QSC PASP 25/04/17*