

University of Chester

Programme Specification
Biblical Studies MA
2023 - 2024

1. Final Award

Master of Arts

2. Programme Title

Biblical Studies

3. Internal Programme Title

Biblical Studies (Missio Dei College)

4. Intermediate / Exit Awards

4a. Award	4b. Title
Postgraduate Diploma	Biblical Studies
Postgraduate Certificate	Biblical Studies

5. Awarding Institution / Body

University of Chester

6. Programme Delivered By

Missio Dei College

7. Location of Delivery

Missio Dei College and by Distance Learning

8. Framework

Postgraduate (Taught)

9. Mode of Study

Full-time and Part-time

10. Forms of Study

Distance, Residential and Open,

11. Normal length of study

2 years part time, 1 year full time

12. Maximum length of study

6 Years

13. Frequency of intake / starting month

Annual - September

14. UCAS Code

N/A

15. JACS and/or HECoS Code

V600

16. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check Required?

No

17. Faculty & Department

17a. Faculty

Arts and Humanities

17b. Department

Theology & Religious Studies

18. Subject Benchmarking Group

Theology and Religious Studies

19. Professional Recognition By (if applicable)

N/A

20. Name of Module Assessment Board (MAB)

Theology and Religious Studies

21. Date of Approval

Thursday 8th June 2023

22. Educational Aims of the Programme

The Aims of this programme are

- To offer a flexible, full-time or part-time postgraduate degree programme in selected areas of biblical studies articulated in relation to the critical methods practiced at the forefront of the discipline.
- To develop an advanced ability to handle written sources using appropriate critical awareness, methods and controls; to marshal coherent and effective arguments and communicate conclusions in oral and written forms; and, for those taking the full Masters awards, to integrate these skills in the production of the Master's dissertation.
- To enable the student to develop and demonstrate a competent grasp of a range of exegetical and hermeneutical skills, informed by or at the forefront of the discipline, and to apply these skills to the critical analysis of biblical texts, with particular regard to the interpretation and the theological significance of the individual texts, and their contribution to wider theological ideas.
- To prepare students for further research.

23. Programme Outcomes

Knowledge and Understanding

Following successful completion of the programme, students should be able to:

- Address analytically a range of current questions in Biblical Studies, possibly focused around a study specialism, applying an advanced, systematic and critical understanding, and to interpret a range of sources using a variety of tools, critical approaches and methodological approaches from the forefront of the discipline. Knowledge will be further deepened through the development of a 18,000-word dissertation. (E.g. TH7402, TH7407, TH7440, TH7445).
- Relate their more specialist knowledge to the wider discourses of Christian Theology and/or within a study specialism and be able to articulate the possible significance of their insights and research findings for the wider Theological and professional communities (e.g. TH7405, TH7406, TH7408, TH7409, TH7411, TH7413, TH7414, TH7436, TH7437).

Cognitive Skills

Following successful completion of the programme, students should be able to:

- Identify, locate, interpret and analyse primary texts and advanced secondary sources with confidence at a research level, possibly as more particularly required within a study specialism, including articles from major peer-reviewed journals and scholarly monographs, and engage with them critically and creatively (e.g. TH7405, TH7406, TH7408, TH7409, TH7411, TH7413, TH7414, TH7436, TH7437, TH7443).
- Exercise a critical awareness of their own and contemporary scholars' differing stances, representing them with fairness and integrity and competently placing them within or between traditional outlooks or positions, and justifying both analysis and synthesis in relation to the contextual and developmental nature of intellectual, social, aesthetic and political responses (e.g. TH7402, TH7407, TH7440, TH7445).
- Manipulate, represent, evaluate and explore complex and potentially incomplete knowledge from the forefront of the field and/or any study specialism chosen by constructing sustained and specifically theological arguments, drawing upon a range of sources and data, and routinely applying more than one mode of analysis to form new hypotheses. These skills will be particularly developed in the independent study module and/or the dissertation (e.g. TH7402, TH7440).

Practical and Professional Skills

Following successful completion of the programme, students should be able to:

- Employ at a professional level critical, analytical and presentational skills, showing a routine instinct to test evidence, assess arguments, evaluate commitments and detect bias.
- Employ a variety of methods, including emic and etic approaches, to solve problems, and to present results creatively.
- Make advanced use of library, IT, computer and internet skills to identify and locate sources, capture, analyse and present data, represent and manipulate knowledge, communicate with others, organise and backup work and operate safely online. Students must be able to use information technology and computer skills for data capture, to identify and retrieve material and support research and presentations.
- Exercise personal responsibility and decision-making, necessary for employment and ministerial vocations, and to apply professional ethical standards to the gathering and use of research data.
- Improve their own learning and performance and develop the self-evaluation required to continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills appropriate to a professional context.
- Make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources (e.g. peer reviewed research articles and/or original materials appropriate to the discipline such as writings of theologians, historical sources/writings relevant to the study of church history, documents from key Christian conferences, etc.)

All of these skills may be related to each of the modules, i.e. TH7402, TH7405, TH7406, TH7407, TH7408, TH7409, TH7411, TH7413, TH7414, TH7436, TH7437, TH7440, TH7443, TH7445.

Communication Skills

Following successful completion of the programme, students should be able to:

- Deal with complex issues systematically, sensitively and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate information, ideas, problems, solutions and conclusions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences (as appropriate).
- Use clear expressions and observe correct academic form.
- Formulate a coherent argument, with appropriate use of data and evidence, and with an awareness of the implications of divergent views.
- Where appropriate, work with others to solve problems and/or reach coherent conclusions.

All of these skills may be related to each of the modules, i.e. TH7402, TH7405, TH7406, TH7407, TH7408, TH7409, TH7411, TH7413, TH7414, TH7436, TH7437, TH7440, TH7443, TH7445

24. Programme Structure and Features; Levels, Modules, Credits and Awards

24a. Programme Structure and Features (levels, modules, credits, awards)

The MA in Biblical Studies is a full- or part-time programme, which can be delivered by a combination of residential teaching and additional tutorial support, or fully by Distance Learning. It sits alongside two other MA programmes: MA in Missional Leadership, and MA in Practical Theology. Each programme has its own distinctive emphasis, though the MA in Biblical Studies has several modules in common with the MA in Practical Theology.

Classroom delivery is via intensive teaching sessions twice a year, and opportunities for ongoing online contact with module tutors.

Modules are available via Distance Learning through the VLE (Moodle). Support includes audio recording of on-campus lectures and full access to lecture notes, together with the opportunity for substantial ongoing contact with tutors, through email, zoom and other online media.

The MA in Biblical Studies requires students to have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of current scholarship and research as it relates to approaches to the exegesis and interpretation of the biblical text. This is complemented by optional modules giving opportunities to look in greater depth at particular texts, to explore the historical, cultural and literary background of the Bible, and to study key themes in biblical theology.

To be awarded the MA in Biblical Studies, students must complete five 20-credit taught modules (from the list below) and an 80-credit dissertation (TH7440). For outline details of individual modules please refer to the module descriptors. Note that not all modules will be available in any particular academic year, though care will be taken to ensure that students continue to have a range of options. Options not taught in a particular year may be available to students through a combination of Distance Learning and on-campus tutorials with subject lecturers.

In order to ensure that students have the correct level of theoretical orientation to undertake advanced study, TH7445 Critical Methods in Biblical Studies is required (unless a closely equivalent module has been completed successfully in the context of previous study at an approved institution and at the same or higher level). Because of the significant focus on biblical exegesis a second module, either TH7411 New Testament Theology or TH7414 Old Testament Theology is also required (again unless a closely equivalent module has been completed successfully in the context of previous study at an approved institution and at the same or higher level).

It is expected that all students will submit a dissertation proposal for formative assessment and feedback prior to commencing the dissertation.

24b. Module Structure

Mod-Code	Level	Title	Credit	Single
TH7402	7	Independent Study Unit	20	Optional
TH7405	7	Biblical Pneumatology	20	Optional
TH7406	7	Biblical Theology of Mission	20	Optional
TH7407	7	Exegetical and Hermeneutical Methods	20	Optional
TH7408	7	Johannine Studies	20	Optional
TH7409	7	Lukan Studies	20	Optional
TH7411	7	New Testament Theology	20	Optional
TH7413	7	Old Testament Narrative	20	Optional
TH7414	7	Old Testament Theology	20	Optional
TH7436	7	The World of the Bible	20	Optional
TH7437	7	Paul's Letters: Methods, Context and Theology	20	Optional

TH7440	7	Dissertation in Biblical Studies	80	Comp
TH7443	7	The Greek Text of Mark's Gospel	20	Optional
TH7445	7	Critical Methods in Biblical Studies	20	Optional

24c. Credit Accumulation

Postgraduate Certificate 60 credits
 Postgraduate Diploma 120 credits (this will require students to take a 6th 20 credit module, which in most cases would be TH7402 Independent Study Unit)
 Master of Arts 180 credits

24d. Details of any derogation from University Regulations (if applicable)

N/A

25. Professional Body Requirements (if applicable)

N/A

26. Admission Requirements

Evidence of candidates' academic ability to work in the area of Biblical Studies at an appropriate level and their potential to complete the programme may be provided in one of the following ways:

- A second class (or above) degree in Biblical Studies, Religious Studies, Theology or a cognate subject
- A second class (or above) degree in another subject area, together with certificated learning (e.g. a Graduate Diploma) in Biblical Studies, Religious Studies, Theology or a cognate subject.
- At least two years' professional experience in a senior position in a Church or Mission context. In such cases, where candidates do not have formal academic qualifications, an access module or written assignment may be used to help assess suitability for the programme. A transparent policy will be followed to ensure equity and parity with regard to student admissions.

Candidates will also need to demonstrate some proficiency in biblical Hebrew and/or New Testament Greek.

Accredited Prior Certificated and Experiential Learning will be considered for students wishing to transfer into the scheme with previously obtained part or intermediate qualifications from other UK universities. This will follow the rules and processes for APCL and APEL set out by the University of Chester.

International Admissions

Those applicants offering overseas qualifications in place of the standard academic entrance requirements will be assessed using UK NARIC and UCAS Guides to International Qualifications. Such qualifications would need to be of a standard equivalent to a second class honours degree or above in order to ensure parity. Overseas students might also be admitted on the basis of professional experience.

English language requirements:

All students must provide evidence of appropriate competency in written and spoken English. For students whose first language is not English, and who have not previously studied in English to Level 3 or above, the normal requirement will be IELTS 6.5, TOEFL 575, and equivalent.

27. Subject Benchmark Statements

The Theology and Religious Studies (TRS) Subject Benchmark Statement, published by the QAA in 2000 and revised in 2007, 2014 and 2019, details the range of subject knowledge (3.1), the qualities of mind (3.2), and the generic skills (3.4) acquired and developed in TRS degree programmes. Appendix A of the Subject Benchmark Statement sets out additional benchmark standards for a master's degree in TRS. The MA in Biblical Studies builds on the benchmark standards set out in our BA programme, which are in line with those TRS benchmarks.

Students are introduced to a range of research approaches and an expanded range of study tools in TH7445, including electronic resources and web-based tools. They develop, too, the research skills necessary to conduct independent study, to find and engage with appropriate source material, to reflect, critically, on academic practice, conclusions and the ethical implications of particular lines of research, and explore and apply appropriately different methodological approaches methodologies (A4.2, A4.3, A6.1). In other modules these attributes are further developed. In addition to tutorial support, students are required to take responsibility for their own learning and to develop a high degree of independence and self-motivation. This is necessary in all modules, though is evident, particularly, in TH7402 and TH7440. TH7407 requires an advanced ability in approaches to texts, including critical engagement with primary and secondary sources, and the use of language skills (A4.3). All modules require students to engage with sources (primary and secondary), to

evaluate source material critically, and to arrive at, and justify, their own independent conclusions. In TH7402 and especially TH7440 students design their own projects and demonstrate an advanced ability to think independently, to select relevant sources, and to engage critically with, and reflect on, a chosen area of in-depth study.

28. Learning, Teaching and Assessment Methods

At level 7 students develop a wide range of advanced study skills. They are also given significant responsibility for their own learning, and, are expected to demonstrate independent study and research skills, albeit with the encouragement and guidance of tutors and within a supportive teaching, learning and research environment.

Students experience a variety of teaching methods. This includes face-to-face teaching, workshops, group work and seminars during residential sessions (in September and January), complemented with lecture notes, additional information via Moodle and email, telephone and Skype support.

Distance Learning will receive a full lecture notes for each module taken and additional information via Moodle – including, where available, audio files of on-campus teaching sessions. The material supplied will contain sufficient information to guide the student through the module – and will include points for further reading and research. A Module Tutor will be available via e-mail, telephone, Zoom or other digital media, to give guidance and ongoing support to students in areas specifically relating to the subject material of the module (we anticipate around 2.5 hours of one one-to-one interaction per module – though will offer additional reasonable support as necessary).

Guidance in research methodology is given to all students at the start of the programme in TH7445 (unless they have successfully completed a module with similar Learning Outcomes).

All 20-credit modules will be assessed by means of a 4,500-word essay, with the exception of TH7445, which comprises 1 portfolio with 2 parts totalling 4500 words. The 80-credit dissertation will be assessed by way of an 18,000-word piece of research writing. There will be no examinations. At Masters level, students should be able to write at length, and engage, critically, with specialist literature in his or her chosen field. A 4500-word written assignment seems an appropriate way to develop these skills and to assess their progress. Ongoing contact with module tutors allows for formative as well as summative assessment of modules.

Students are expected to submit a dissertation proposal ahead of starting an 80-credit dissertation. This is not formally assessed, though students receive feedback, offering formative assessment. Students are assigned to a specialist supervisor for this part of the programme, and will have access to regular supervision – usually via email, telephone or Zoom.

29. Careers and Employability

Following the acquisition of this award, students will be equipped to

- Conduct independent research into a particular area of study
- Gather, organise and assess data from primary and secondary sources
- Critically analyse and evaluate the views and arguments of others
- Structure and communicate ideas effectively by written and verbal means
- Organise their own workload towards the meeting of deadlines
- Show critical self-awareness and open-mindedness towards other cultures and viewpoints
- Present an argument to support their own view
- Demonstrate improved IT skills.

Successful students will be able to apply the methods and techniques that they have learned to review, consolidate, extend and apply their knowledge and understanding, and to initiate and carry out projects; critically evaluate arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and data (that may be incomplete), to make judgements, and to frame appropriate questions to achieve a solution - or identify a range of solutions - to a problem; communicate information, ideas, problems, and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.

Students will also have qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:

- the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility;
- decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts; and
- the learning ability needed to undertake appropriate further training of a professional or equivalent nature.

This programme of study may be used for personal and academic development, or to prepare for further research. It is intended, too, as continuing professional development for those in Christian ministry who are seeking to improve their knowledge and understanding.

30. Equality

A number of modules on this programme offer opportunities for addressing questions of gender, sexuality, age, disability, race and religious identity, whether in the context of biblical backgrounds, church history or contemporary cultural and church contexts.

The MA in Biblical Studies conforms to the University of Chester's policies and priorities regarding admissions, widening access and participation, equal opportunities and AP(E)L; and it offers individual academic support to all its students.

31. Additional Information

In the event of unforeseen circumstances which means that meeting in the classroom is not possible, lectures will take place online.

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