

Programme specification 2012/2013

School of Oriental and African Studies

The following information forms the programme specification at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. It gives definitive information relating to a programme of study and is written for a public audience, particularly prospective and current students. It is also used for other purposes such as initial programme approval, and is therefore produced at the start of the programme development process. Once approved, it forms the base-line information for all statements relating to the programme and is updated as approved amendments are made.

CORE INFORMATION

Programme title	BA Study of Religions and...
Final award	BA Honours
Intermediate awards	None
Mode of attendance	Full time or part time
UCAS code	N/A
Professional body accreditation	N/A
Date specification created/updated	2011

WHY CHOOSE THIS PROGRAMME?

Why study at SOAS?	SOAS is unique as the only higher education institution in the UK specialising in the study of Africa, Asia and the Middle East. The School also has the largest concentration of specialist faculty concerned with the study of these areas at any university in the world. SOAS is consistently ranked among the top higher education institutions in the UK and the world and it also offers a friendly, vibrant environment for students in a diverse and close-knit community..
What is special about this programme?	The SOAS Department of the Study of Religions offers an unrivalled range of study options across many religions and regions: African religions, Buddhism (in India, Tibet, South East Asia, China and Japan), Chinese and Japanese religions, Christianity (in Africa, the Near East and Asia), Hinduism, Jainism and other Indian religions, Islam, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, as well as theories and approaches in the study of religions. Moreover, many of the languages relevant for these traditions are taught at

	SOAS. Students can also choose from other religion courses elsewhere within SOAS and the University of London. Because of its role as an international centre for the study of Africa and Asia, SOAS has traditionally been deeply interested in religions that have been regarded as 'non-Western'.
Who would it suit?	Staff and students come from many different backgrounds and there is no assumption of religious commitment, simply a shared desire for understanding. The BA Study of Religions helps students develop not only analytical and critical thinking, but also in-depth knowledge and understanding of particular religious traditions, cultures and languages. As a result SoR graduates have acquired a range of transferable skills enabling them to work in a wide range of fields across the world, including international development, diplomacy, banking and finance, the arts, world media, language services, the law, education and policy research.
Programme structure	Students register for 4 full course units or equivalent each year. At least 9 of the 12 units over the 3 years of the degree must be from the approved Study of Religions units. In Year 1, all students take the compulsory core course Introduction to the Study of Religions (1 unit) and any four half-unit Area or Foundation Courses. The remaining one course unit may be either Introduction to Islam, or Introduction to Jainism, or a language unit from the Languages & Cultures Faculty, or an 'open option' from another department. In Years 2 and 3, students will largely design their own study programme by choosing, in consultation with their personal tutor, from the many advanced courses available each year. All single subject BA students also undertake a supervised compulsory Individual Study Project that results in a 10,000 words dissertation. To be eligible for an Honours degree a student is expected to successfully complete a minimum of eleven courses. Only the grades of

	courses taken after the first year is completed count towards the final degree result.
Assessment summary	A combination of different assessment methods are used in the different courses, including essays, unseen examinations, group and individual presentations, Independent Study Projects, and learning journals, in which students are expected to show knowledge of appropriate information sources.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

SOAS has general minimum entrance requirements for registration for an undergraduate degree and these can be viewed at (<http://www.soas.ac.uk/admissions/ug/entryreq/>)

Minimum entrance requirement is ABB, IB: 34 & 5/5/5 in HLs

PROGRAMME AIMS

What will this programme give the student an opportunity to achieve?

- To acquire in-depth understanding of at least two different religious traditions
- To be aware of and understand some of the theoretical issues in the Study of Religions
- To foster the academic study of religions, particularly the religions of Asia and Africa, in accordance with the special mission of SOAS

PROGRAMME LEARNING OUTCOMES

What will the student learn?

Knowledge

- An introductory knowledge and understanding of the teachings, practices and socio-historical contexts of a range of religious traditions
- A more in-depth knowledge and understanding of at least two religious traditions.
- Understanding of the relations between different aspects of religion (ritual, doctrinal, ethical, symbolic etc.)
- Knowledge of socio-historical contexts in which religions have developed
- Understanding of the depth and variety of academic scholarship in one or more areas of religious studies
- Knowledge of relationships and mutual influences between different religions
- Competence in handling methods, theories and concepts employed in the contemporary study of religious beliefs and practices.

Intellectual (thinking) skills

- Capacity to discuss religious issues in an articulate, informed and impartial manner.

- Ability to frame and present an argument.
- Ability to absorb, process and distinguish descriptive and interpretative material
- Ability to assess the information on religions by reference to its source, verifiability and relation to existing knowledge.
- Capacity to think both critically and creatively about religious issues and topics.

Subject-based practical skills

The programme aims to help students with the following practical skills:

- Academic writing
- IT-based information retrieval and processing
- Presentational skills
- Examination technique
- Independent study skills
- Reflexive learning

Transferable skills

The programme will encourage students to:

- Write concisely and with clarity
- Explore a variety of sources for research materials
- Work to deadlines and standards
- Develop awareness of the relativity of religious and cultural values, beliefs and attitudes.
- Assess the validity and cogency of arguments
- Make judgments involving complex factors

PROGRAMME STRUCTURE AND REQUIREMENTS FOR GAINING AN AWARD

SOAS has standard requirements relating to the structure and duration of undergraduate programmes and for the award and classification of these programmes. Details can be found at

<http://www.soas.ac.uk/registry/degreeregulations/file60378.pdf>

Programme structure diagram

Year of study	Level of study	Course code	Course title	Credit	Status	Notes
1		158000096	Introduction to the Study of Religions	30	compulsory	
1		158000110	Buddhism: Foundation	15	core	
1		158000117	Christianity: Foundation	15	core	
1		158000118	Hinduism: Foundation	15	core	
1		158000148	Judaism: Foundation	15	core	
1		158000100	Religions of East and Central Asia	15	core	
1		158000119	Religions of Africa	15	core	
1 or 2		157400020	Introduction to Islam	30	optional	
1 or 2		158000053	Introduction to Jainism	30	optional	
2 or 3		158000135	Advanced Theory in the Study of Religions	30	optional	
2 or 3		158000121	Buddhism in Central Asia	15	optional	
2 or 3		158000171	Buddhism in Pre-Modern China	30	optional	

2 or 3		158000179	Buddhist Legends: Readings in Avadana Literature	15	optional	
2 or 3		158000097	Buddhist Monasticism	15	optional	
2 or 3		158000180	Conflict in Compliance: About the Lives of Buddhist Monks in Ancient India	15	optional	
2 or 3		158000177	Contemporary Islamism in South Asia: Readings in Sayyid Abu l-A'la Mawdudi	30	optional	
2 or 3		158000116	Critical Theory and the Study of Religions	30	optional	
2 or 3		158000155	Daily Life of Jews in Antiquity	15	optional	
2 or 3		158000172	Death and the Meaning of Life	30	optional	
2 or 3		158000132	Eastern Christianity	15	optional	
2 or 3		157400023	Independent Study Project in the Study of Religions	30	compulsory	
2 or 3		158000124	Intermediate Pali	30	optional	
2 or 3		158000169	Islam in Britain	30	optional	
2 or 3		158000044	Japanese Religion: A Historical Overview	15	optional	
2 or 3		158000168	Jewish Identity From Ancient to Modern Times	15	optional	
2 or 3		158000037	Mahayana Buddhism	15	optional	
2 or 3		158000130	Martyrs & Monks in Eastern Christian Writings	30	optional	
2 or 3		158000149	Messianic Movements in Islamic History	15	optional	
2 or 3		155901282	Middle Persian	30	optional	
2 or 3		158000163	Minority Religions in the Contemporary Middle East	15	optional	
2 or 3		158000022	Mysticism in the Great Traditions	30	optional	
2 or 3		158000175	Myth and Mythmaking	30	optional	
2 or 3		158000054	Non-Violence in Jain Scriptures, Philosophy and Law	30	optional	
2 or 3		158000131	Orthodox Christianity	15	optional	
2 or 3		158000048	Readings in Mahayana Sutra Literature	15	optional	
2 or 3		158000024	Religion and Gender	30	optional	
2 or 3		158000123	Religious Philosophies of Ancient and Medieval India	30	optional	
2 or 3		158000156	Representations of the Holocaust	15	optional	
2 or 3		158000151	Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism	30	optional	
2 or 3		158000174	Shan Buddhism	15	optional	
2 or 3		158000147	Shi'a Islam: Religious Authority and Community Identity	30	optional	
2 or 3		158000034	Syriac For Beginners	30	optional	
2 or 3		158000150	Taoism and Chinese Religions	30	optional	
2 or 3		15800181	Taoism: The Great Tradition	15	optional	
2 or 3		158000023	Textual Sources of Classical Hinduism	30	optional	
2 or 3		158000160	The Bible and its Interpretation in Ancient Judaism	15	optional	
2 or 3		158000154	The Role and Representation of Women in Judaism	15	optional	

2 or 3		158000043	Themes in Japanese Religions	15	optional	
2 or 3		158000018	Theravada Buddhism	30	optional	
2 or 3		158000050	Tibetan Buddhism	15	optional	
2 or 3		158000134	Tibetan Buddhist Texts From Central Asia	15	optional	
2 or 3		158000028	Translation of Buddhist Texts	30	optional	
2 or 3		158000128	Vedic Sanskrit	30	optional	
2 or 3		158000095	Zoroastrian Literature in Translation	30	optional	
2 or 3		158000029	Zoroastrianism in the Ancient and Modern Worlds	30	optional	

The availability of optional/elective courses may vary in a given academic session due to factors such as staff absence and student numbers. For an up to date list of courses running in a given academic session please refer to the degree structures as listed on the SOAS website for the degree programmes taught by each Department.

TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

Knowledge

- The first year is comprised of (a) a core course introducing key issues, topics, theories, methods and concepts in the study of religions with embedded undergraduate skills training in academic writing, library and electronic resources retrieval skills, group presentation planning and examination techniques and (b) 'regional' and 'religions' foundation courses covering the SOAS areas.
- Second and third year programmes offer courses which employ a variety of methods to study a wide range of religious traditions covering different geographical areas and historical periods from Christianity in Africa to Japanese religions, with themed courses in religion and gender and critical theory.
- Subject knowledge is often developed through lectures and seminar discussions, supplemented by directed study of texts, journal articles, visits to religious centres, individual and group research projects, directed readings, and by supervised individual research and writing.
- Assessments are made by essays, unseen examinations, group and individual presentations, Independent Study Projects, and learning journals. All assessment methods will require some demonstration of subject knowledge and understanding.

Intellectual (thinking) skills

- Skills such as analysis, synthesis, evaluation and application are often practised and demonstrated through active learning processes involving assignments or projects, and group learning activities (seminars/tutorials, workshops, fieldtrips etc).
- Teaching, monitoring and feedback on students' developing intellectual skills and capacities through lectures, writing tasks, seminar discussions, supervision and guidance in the use of learning resources.
- Assessment might utilise written examinations or problem-based exercises. Independent project work or research dissertations might be used to demonstrate subject-specific intellectual skills.

Subject-based practical skills

- Training sessions on IT-based study and research provided by Library and

Information Services staff and on essay writing, presentational and examination skills by Learning and Teaching Unit staff. These skills are developed through seminar discussions, lectures, visits, individual and group research projects, directed readings and supervised individual research and writing

- Assessment of competence in exercising a practical skill via essays, unseen examinations, group and individual presentations, Independent Study Projects, and learning journals, in which students are expected to show a knowledge of appropriate information sources.

Transferable skills

- Skills that are readily transferable to employment and related contexts such as communication, teamwork etc can be developed through naturally arising opportunities within the curriculum or through work placements.
- Written communication will be enhanced through essay/dissertation writing or writing up projects.
- Oral communication can be developed in presentations and group work.
- Team working skills may be demonstrated and assessed through collaborative projects.
- The different kinds of work and source materials used in the degree provide test cases practising analysis and critical thinking.
- The courses usually incorporate substantial elements of independent learning, with feedback
- Assessment is through regular monitoring and feedback on progress during each stage of the course, seminar discussion and individual supervision.

REFERENCE POINTS

The following reference points were used in designing the programme:

1. School Learning and Teaching Strategy
2. Faculty Learning and Teaching Strategy
3. Staff research
4. QAA framework for higher education qualifications
5. TRS subject benchmark

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT

SOAS has internal procedures to assure the quality of provision to be offered to students and to enhance the quality in the light of experience following delivery, taking into account the input of external experts and students. The procedures are set out in the School's Quality Assurance Handbook and can be viewed at (<http://www.soas.ac.uk/add/qualityassurance/quality-assurance-handbook/>).

SOAS is also subject to periodic external review from bodies such as the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education and relevant professional and statutory regulatory bodies.

The procedures described in the Quality Assurance Handbook are in place to provide a high quality student experience for those choosing to study at SOAS, and student input and evaluation of their experiences is greatly valued. Students make an input to the ongoing development of their programmes, and the environment in which they operate, in a number of ways, including:

- formal student evaluation as part of the annual programme review;
- student representation on School committees at various levels (through the Students' Union) where many relevant issues are discussed;

FURTHER INFORMATION

- [SOAS Vision and Strategy Statement](#);
- [Quality Assurance Handbook](#);
- [UCAS website](#);
- [QAA website](#);