

# Theology and Religion

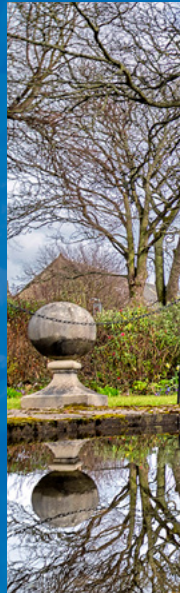
**1ST IN THE UK**  
FOR RESEARCH  
Research Excellence  
Framework (REF) 2021

UNDERGRADUATE  
GUIDE



## Why is Theology and Religion at the University of Aberdeen the best choice for me?

Theology and Religion is ranked 1st in the UK for research by the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021. Through the highest-quality teaching and research, you can explore all aspects of theology and religion. You'll join an international community of students and leading academics carrying forward over 500 years of tradition. Whether you want to study theology for personal, vocational or intellectual reasons, the University of Aberdeen is the place for you.



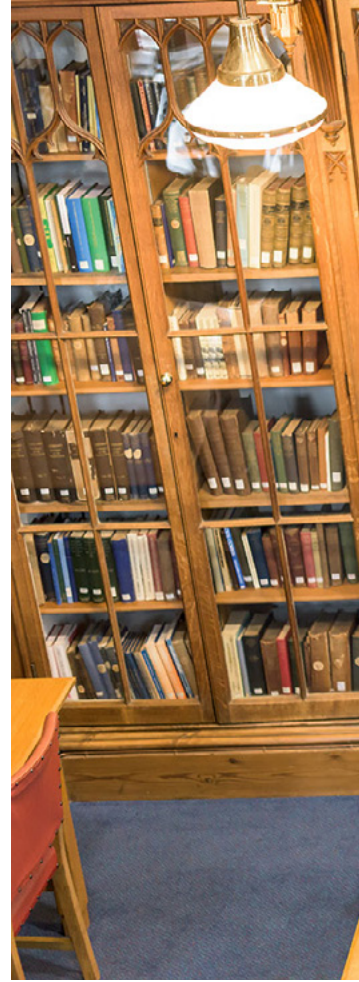
Theology and Religion has been taught at the University of Aberdeen since 1495. Like in other ancient universities, our students are taught within our Divinity department and are affectionately known as 'Divines'. Most students take a degree in Theology and Religion but if you wish to, or if training for ministry is your aim, you can take a degree in Divinity.



# Explore your interests

Aberdeen is structured a little differently from other universities, and these differences make Aberdeen special. To help you get started let us explain the basics.

At the University of Aberdeen we have designed a programme that ensures our students have an enriched learning experience. You can choose from a range of specialisms including: Christian Ethics, Practical Theology, Systematic Theology, Old Testament, New Testament, Church History and Ancient Languages. This diverse range of study options means that you can explore your own interests throughout your degree programme.



University shouldn't  
just prepare you for  
your first job, but for  
the rest of your life.

**Nicky Campbell OBE**

TV and radio presenter & Aberdeen alumnus



# A variety of approaches to study

Our Theology and Religion degree pathways involve the study of religion in its theological, historical, philosophical, literary, institutional and contemporary contexts. There are also Joint Degree opportunities which combine study of Theology and Religion with other disciplines.

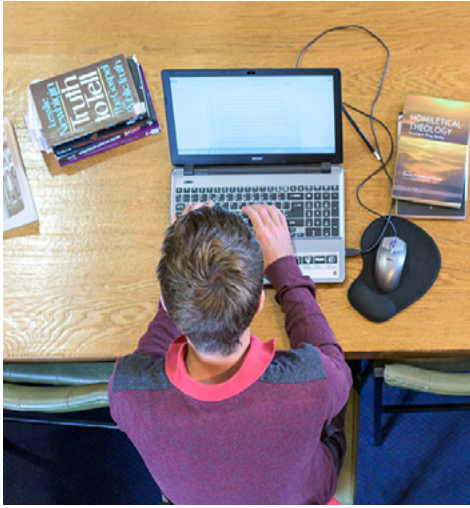
Our courses are offered on a biennial cycle, meaning students benefit from a broad subject choice. Examples of the types of courses that may be available are listed below.

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## Years 1 and 2

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- Literature and Society in Ancient Israel
  - The Rise of Christianity
  - Introduction to Christian Theology
  - Exploring the New Testament
  - Why Believe?  
Thinking about God and the Good
  - What it Means to be Dead
  - Atheism and Atheisms
  - Real Life Handmaids' Tales
  - Saints, Demons and the Desert
  - Religions of Ancient Greece and Beyond
  - Magic Mystery, Spells and Potions
  - Utopia and Apocalypse: Dreaming in the Perfect World in Science and Religion
  - Film as a Public Ethical Arena
  - God, Sex and Death in our Technical Age
  - Ancient World and Modern Reception: Living in the Past
  - God, Sexualities and Identity
  - Ancient Empires
  - From Jesus to Calvin
  - Hebrew Language
  - Ancient Greek Language (New Testament)
  - Latin
  - The Bible in Art, Literature and Music
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## Sharing our treasures

Students carry forward the vibrant 500 year-old tradition in their own subject-specific library hosted in the historic surrounds of the King's Quadrangle. They also enjoy spectacular views from the top floor of our state of the art new university library.

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## Years 3 and 4

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- Major Themes in Christian Theology
- God and Salvation in the Letters of Paul
- Scottish Revivals
- Christianity in Scotland: History and Theology of the Church in Scotland
- Contemporary Issues in the Hebrew Bible
- Philosophy of Religion
- Pastoral Theology: Trauma, Suffering and Healing
- Dissertation
- Creation and Cosmos in the Ancient World
- Animals and Monsters in the Ancient World
- Theology in a Divided World: Conflict, Peace and Transformation
- Encounters with Great Theologians
- Materialising Faith
- God and Salvation in the Gospels and Acts
- Reformation, Reason and Revolt
- Myth
- Theology, Politics and Society
- The Followers of Lady Poverty - Saint Francis and his Disciples

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For an up-to-date course listing, please refer to the Divinity degree webpage.



# A day in the life of a Divinity student

Here is an example of a typical day as a ‘Divine’ studying towards a degree in Theology and Religion:



## **Jesus in History and Culture Lecture - 11:00**

This course will examine the representations of Jesus that are found in the four canonical gospels as well as in a selection of non-canonical (apocryphal) gospels. By evaluating the evidence of such witnesses and reading this against the social and cultural backdrop of first-century Palestine, the module will consider the question of what “the Historical Jesus” was really like and how this figure relates both to the theological traditions of the church and to popular reworkings of the gospel stories through the centuries in art, literature and film.



## **The Pilgrim City Lecture - 13:00**

This course traces the history of Christianity from its establishment as the religion of the Roman Empire to the period just prior to its arrival in the Americas in the 15th century.





### **Greek Language (New Testament) - 15:00**

This course will introduce students to the form of Greek found in the New Testament and help students to begin to read and write in ancient Greek.



### **Exploring the Tradition of Western Ethics Lecture - 16:00**

How do we know right from wrong? What are our responsibilities towards others? How should we engage with social and political problems and issues? What constitutes a good life? This course provides an opportunity for students to explore the rich tradition of Western ethical reflection and moral formation. It does so by surveying the various ways in which ethics and morality have been understood and approached by major figures in the Western tradition.



# The Department of Divinity

Our programmes in Theology and Religion nurture core transferable skills – such as critical reading, independent thinking, written and oral communication, and interpersonal abilities – that will be useful in whatever lies ahead for our students.





‘Studying Divinity in Aberdeen is fantastic because the faculty is very helpful and competent, and they are not afraid to ask the difficult questions in Theology. There is also a great sense of community among students and professors. I would recommend students choose Aberdeen for studying Theology and Religious Studies because the classes are engaging and challenging...’

**Angelika, Second-Year Student in  
Theology and Religious Studies**



‘I came to the University of Aberdeen because of its reputation as an élite university, its distinguished theologians and scholars of religions, and its ancient tradition in theological studies. I deeply appreciate the diversity in the Divinity department. Its international faculty boasts a broad spectrum of research interests and methods.’

**Daniele, Second-Year Student in  
Theology and Religious Studies**

# Graduating Class



## Michael Poobalan

“My time as an undergraduate student of Divinity at Aberdeen has been a privilege and a delight. There a lot of areas covered in the first two years of the course such as systematics, biblical studies, church history and practical theology, which allows plenty of time and opportunity to choose the area(s) you are most interested in. The Faculty are extremely helpful and always assist you in any way they can when you require help. In addition, the teaching staff are renowned experts in their respective fields, which brought world-renowned figures such as Professor Stanley Hauerwas to the University. The campus is enticing, with a mix of both old and new architecture, and close together which makes travelling between classes easy. The Divinity programme is a diverse and compelling course which I recommend to any aspiring theologian.”

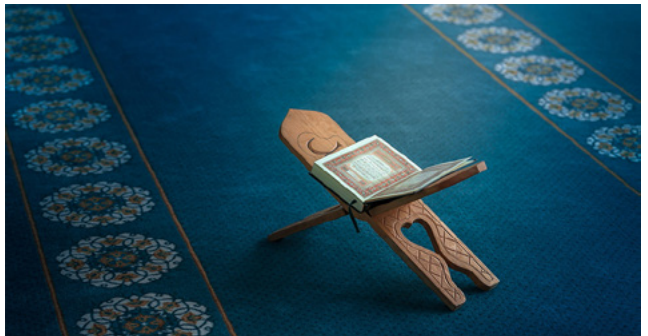




## Emily Metcalf-Corrison

“When looking for universities to study Divinity at, Aberdeen was the one that stood out from the rest. The support from the department is second to none and the courses themselves are taught with enthusiasm from the lecturers. The variety of courses offered in the different areas of theology have meant that I have been able to engage in interesting topics and ideas while also pursuing the areas that I wanted to focus on. In doing this course my life has been enriched in many areas, as it not only provides academic growth, but also you are given the opportunity to grow as a person. This course has allowed me opportunities that I would not have otherwise been able to have. The department not only offers great courses, but is also invested in hosting extra events, such as the Gifford Lectures which provide an enlightening arena to engage with current theological issues. I would highly recommend this programme to anyone who is interested in Theology/Divinity and Religious Studies as there are many opportunities offered to explore different avenues related to them due to the wide variety of courses offered.”

**WORLD-CLASS  
TEACHING AND  
RESEARCH AT  
AN ANCIENT  
UNIVERSITY**



# What sort of career could I enter?

Employers highly value what humanities students learn at University, focus groups and surveys show. More than 9 out of 10 say a job candidate's capacity for thinking and communicating clearly and solving complex problems is more important than his or her degree subject, according to an AAC&U poll. More than three-quarters favour applicants who understand other cultures.

Our graduates have had no difficulty in securing rewarding jobs in the private, public and charitable sectors. Recent graduates have gone into teaching, church work, development work and the civil service. Here is what a few recent graduates had to say about how their studies have been useful in their careers:

## Was your degree at Aberdeen essential for getting to where you are now?

I never thought I would have to deal with so many legal documents, yet, having to read and analyse primary sources really isn't any different from analysing a contract. Also, having to form an opinion and back it up in essays has formed a good basis in being a good negotiator. It is not just about what is on the piece of paper after four years, but all the skills you have gained along the way.

**Buyer for a major supermarket chain**





Yes. It gave me confidence in myself and in my ability with words. It taught me not to always accept the accepted version of events, to try to see the 'big picture', to empathise with the people involved. It was essential in being able to distinguish the critical items from the merely important and to present them in a concise, legible manner.

**CEO, European manufacturing company**

I quickly found that the training I'd had at Aberdeen ... was an excellent preparation: skills in researching a subject, analysing it, and explaining conclusions orally and in writing.

**Civil servant in the Scottish Office**

'Our programmes in Theology and Religion provide core transferable skills that will be useful in whatever lies ahead for our students, including: critical reading, independent thinking, written and oral communication, and interpersonal skills.'

**Paul T Nimmo**  
Head of Divinity

# Global Top 35 for Divinity, Theology and Religious Studies

QS World University Rankings  
by Subject 2022

**Interested? Find out more:**

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