



LAMBETH RESEARCH DEGREES IN THEOLOGY (ARCHBISHOP'S EXAMINATION IN THEOLOGY)

GENERAL INFORMATION LEAFLET

June 2025

This document is intended for anyone thinking about applying to the Lambeth Research Degrees in Theology scheme and for anyone preparing an application.

This document is part of the application pack, which comprises:

Information for applicants:

- **Introductory statement by the Archbishop of Canterbury**
- **LRDT Regulations**
- **Planning Your Research**
- **Research parameters**
- **Timing of applications**

Application documents:

- **Application for probationary status form**
- **Reference request form**
- **Application checklist**

If you are making an application and do not have any of these documents, please contact the Administrator, Dr Helen Lunnon: helen.lunnon@lambethpalace.org.uk

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Introduction The Archbishop of Canterbury awards postgraduate research degrees in Theology to MPhil and PhD levels. His vision for the Scheme is set out in his introductory statement.

The Scheme seeks to maintain equivalence to and comparability with degrees offered at the same level at publicly financed higher education institutions. To this end its structures and practices have been developed with close attention to Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) requirements and to good practice in the university sector, as appropriate to the size and character of the Scheme.

The Scheme is managed and administered by its Officers, including the Director and the Academic Dean, and a Council and an Academic Board, on the basis of delegated responsibility from the Archbishop. The Academic Board also appoints a Research Training Sub-Committee.

Numbers on the scheme The scheme is limited, through the terms of its Memorandum of Understanding with the Office for Students, to no more than 30 students at any one time. Please be aware in applying that, given that doctoral studies can typically take up to six years, the number admitted on to the course, being dependent on the number graduating, will be in the low single figures each year.

Research Parameters LRDT is a distance learning scheme for MPhil and PhD students in theology broadly conceived. Face-to-face meetings between students and LRDT officers are limited, but meetings between students and their supervisor(s) are regular, and can be face-to-face, or online. The LRDT operates with a very slim infrastructure, and academics give their time voluntarily to the governing bodies. All its Officers have full-time roles in addition to their work for LRDT.

LRDT's volunteer governing bodies contain distinguished and senior academics, and the scheme is well placed to call upon a wide range of academic resource. This is because its supervisors and examiners are drawn from multiple universities, whereas theology and religion departments must angle their specialisms to suit those of their in-house staff. Its breadth is therefore in its generous capacity for different areas of study and interdisciplinary inquiry, and indirectly in strengthening the place of academic theology within the life of ministry.

However, LRDT cannot easily support all forms of research. Research projects that require institutional support for intensive training from scratch in particular research methods (e.g. social science research methods within pastoral theology) might be better placed in an institution that has the infrastructure to offer that kind of training. The same is true for the kind of research question that might lead to a professional doctorate such as a D.Min. – questions that might arise, for example, out of the direct experience of ministry in a particular context. As many of LRDT's applicants and students are ordained ministers this is inevitably an area of interest for some of those who apply; and the scheme is in principle keen to support practical theology projects where possible. It is therefore important also to say that the LRDT actively welcomes and can support the supervision of this kind of research if, but only if, the applicant is

already equipped with the necessary research skills. Please refer to 'Research Parameters' at the beginning of the Application Checklist document.

Criteria for the degrees These are higher degrees by research only. They require the student to produce a thesis which meets specified criteria set out in paragraphs 51 – 58 of the Regulations. The key points are as follows:

The PhD degree

1. The PhD thesis must be a substantial work of original scholarship which is suitable for publication in an academic or peer-reviewed context and which contributes to the advancement of learning in the academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice.
2. Doctoral degrees are awarded to students who have shown that:
 - they can create and interpret new knowledge, application or understanding at the forefront of the discipline;
 - they have acquired a systematic understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice;
 - they are able to conceptualise, design and implement a project for generating new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems if these arise;
 - they have a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

The MPhil degree

1. MPhil degrees are awarded to students who have shown that:
 - they have a systematic understanding of knowledge, coupled with a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of the academic discipline or field of study;
 - they understand in a comprehensive way the techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship;
 - they can exercise originality in applying knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline;
 - they have a conceptual understanding that enables them to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline; to evaluate methods and develop critiques of them; and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.

In addition, to give you a full picture of what is expected of candidates for these degrees, there is detailed guidance on how a thesis is to be presented in annex B of the Regulations, which you can find on the Scheme website.

Arrangements All students work with one or more supervisors. In addition to their work on their chosen thesis topic, they also follow an agreed programme of research training which is relevant to their research aims and appropriate to their previous qualifications and experience. A Training Needs Analysis form features as part of the Induction for new students. You will be asked to complete this at an early stage of your studies to better understand your personal research training needs and how they might be met.

The scheme envisages part-time study, but is also flexible enough to permit full-time study if circumstances require this.

Time commitment People who are thinking about applying to the scheme often ask: what is the time investment going to be? How many hours a week am I going to have to set aside for this? There is no simple answer to this question. It will vary according to the individual and their own circumstances. The Open University advises applicants that “part-time students are expected to commit to spending a minimum of 18.5 hours a week on study”: and this figure seems broadly right to us. Somewhere between 15 and 20 hours a week is a reasonable expectation.

ELIGIBILITY

To enrol on the scheme, you need not necessarily be a member of the Church of England. But you should be aware, and you should agree to accept, that degrees are awarded by the Archbishop of Canterbury in the context of Anglican worship.

Also, our degrees can only be conferred on those who are eligible to take the oath of allegiance to His Majesty the King. You must therefore fall into one of the following categories:

- (a) a British subject;
- (b) a national of a Commonwealth country which retains the King as head of state;
- (c) a holder of dual nationality;
- (d) a member of the clergy of the Church of England’s Diocese in Europe;
- (e) a foreign national who has British residency or is permanently domiciled in the UK, and who is not otherwise prevented by virtue of your own nationality and citizenship from taking the Oath of Allegiance.

We cannot accept an application from you if:

- it is impossible to appoint a supervisor for you or your topic
- if you have already completed the research which you wish to present for our degree, or
- if you are proposing to present work which has already been failed by another institution.

Academic entry requirements You will normally hold a good honours degree, i.e. first class or a high upper second class in Theology, Religious Studies or a discipline related to the subject on which you wish to write your thesis (for example, a degree in History when you are proposing a thesis on a church history topic).

English language requirements If your first language is not English, you will normally need to provide recent evidence of proficiency in English through an internationally recognised English language test. The evidence you provide will be assessed against current requirements in appropriate UK universities. However, this requirement may be waived if you have recently completed part or all of your previous theological education in English: if you think this may apply to you, you should seek advice from the Academic Dean at an early stage of the process.

SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION

Before preparing your application, you are strongly advised to read the document 'Planning Your Research'. This includes guidance on:

- What is research?
- Finding a topic
- The process of research
- Preparing your research proposal

The last of these is especially important to you at this stage, as the strength of your research proposal will be a central element in how the admissions panel views your application.

At an early stage, you should send the reference request form and a copy of your research proposal to two referees who are in a position to assess your academic and personal capability to carry out research at MPhil/PhD level. It is possible that you may not have studied formally for a number of years, and as a result will find it difficult to identify suitably qualified academic referees such as former tutors or supervisors. If so, you should try to find people who can nevertheless comment helpfully on your academic ability and suitability for completing a prolonged programme of individual research.

As requested on the form, the referees should send their references directly to the Administrator (not to you). You are responsible for ensuring that they are willing to act in this capacity and that they submit the references as requested. We won't be able to take your application forward until we have received your full application and both the references.

When you make your application, you will need to send us all of the following documents:

- (a) the application for probationary status form
- (b) your research proposal
- (c) the names and contact details of the two referees to whom you will already have sent the reference forms, as above
- (d) academic certificates and, if available, academic transcripts
- (e) documentary evidence that you meet the eligibility requirements set out above
- (f) where necessary, evidence of proficiency in English.

Electronic submissions are preferred.

In the appropriate place on the application form you will need to tell us whether or not you have any unspent criminal convictions or cautions. The admissions panel will consider all

applications on academic merit in the first instance, but may then take a criminal conviction into account in reaching a decision on whether to offer you a place on the scheme.

It is also important that at an early stage of the application process you let us know whether you foresee any logistical difficulties which you might encounter in being able to carry out your research (e.g. access to resources or upcoming personal life/work commitments).

Selection of students to the scheme will be based on academic merit assessed by interview. The scheme aims to support the academically strongest candidates; all applicants are welcome to discuss accommodation of reasonable adjustments based on individuals' needs. Please contact the Administrator who will put you in contact with an Academic Officer.

You should send your completed application form, research proposal and other accompanying documentation as outlined above, preferably by email, to:

helen.lunnon@lambethpalace.org.uk

Postal address:
Dr Helen Lunnon
Administrator
Lambeth Research Degrees in Theology
Lambeth Palace
London SE1 7JU

You will need to apply by the advertised closing date, which is normally in the third week of January. You can find the date on the home page of the web site for the Scheme ([The Archbishops Examination in Theology \(AET\) \(aet-lambeth.org\)](http://TheArchbishopsExaminationinTheology(AET)(aet-lambeth.org))).

Your application will be considered by a panel of at least two people, one of whom will normally be the Director or Academic Dean; it may also include members of the Academic Board.

If:

- (a) your papers are complete
- (b) you meet all the criteria, and
- (c) your proposed research topic is sufficiently clearly expressed and demarcated for potential supervisors to be identified

you may be invited for interview. Interviews are usually held on-line, but if in person it will likely be at Lambeth Palace. You will need to pay your own expenses.

Interviews take place during March and early. If you have a proposal which, though promising, needs redrafting with a clearer focus, this timescale gives scope for you to resubmit it in time for a final decision at the May meeting of the Academic Board. Fuller information on the timings of the admissions process is set out in a separate document: a Note on the timing of applications.

The panel will then make its recommendation to the Academic Board, which has the final say.

Following the May meeting of the Board, which is often early in the month, you will be informed of the outcome as soon as possible, usually within two weeks.

The scheme's academic year commences 01 October; all new students will begin their registration and studies on this date each year.

THE ACADEMIC SCHEME

Probationary period All students will undertake, under supervision, a period of induction and probation of between three and twelve months. During this period you will attend a one-day induction course and will also be entitled to up to six supervisory sessions. The supervisor for the probationary period will normally be your principal supervisor following registration.

At the end of the period of induction and probation, you will write a probationary essay of between 5,000 and 8,000 words, and you will submit it, together with the application form for the MPhil degree, to the Academic Board, who will decide whether you are to progress to MPhil registration. At this stage also, the Board will approve the provisional title of your thesis.

Length of Study Once the probation period is completed, the following timescales apply (although these may vary if you seek and are granted a period of intermission):

MPhil: 2 years full-time; 4 years part-time

PhD: 3 years full-time; 6 years part-time

The timescale given for the PhD includes the initial period spent registered for the MPhil.

Length of Theses The maximum length of a thesis accepted for the MPhil degree is 50,000 words and for the PhD degree 100,000 words, including footnotes but excluding the bibliography or bibliographical references.

Costs of Study The Lambeth Research Degrees scheme is a dispersed learning scheme, and the fees students pay reflect the services they receive. The fee structure is reviewed annually.

Further information, including current fee levels, are set out on the scheme's website. You will be invoiced by the Administrator on behalf of the Treasurer.

In addition to the basic fees, you should be aware that you will need to set aside funding for books and other research expenses, which may include libraries, supervisions and conferences.

On library access, most universities now grant at least electronic library access to their alumnae/alumni. The AET/LRDT has no library but all students of the Lambeth Scheme are

eligible to join Lambeth Palace Library. In addition, the Academic Dean will write in support of an application to any other library to which a student wishes to gain access.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

If you need more information than has been provided in this document and others in the Application Pack, please contact the Administrator, Dr Helen Lunnon (helen.lunnon@lambethpalace.org.uk)