

**ENGLISH BENEDICTINE
CONGREGATION**

**DISTANCE LEARNING
THEOLOGY COURSE**

PROSPECTUS

January 2006
Revised November 2008

INTRODUCTION

The EBC Distance Learning Programme in Theology was conceived by Dom Henry Wansbrough after the General Chapter held at Ampleforth in 2001. It is designed primarily to support the theological and philosophical studies of junior monks of our Congregation, and especially to enable them to pursue studies in their own monasteries. It is hoped that this might help foster the studies in the individual houses of our Congregation.

The Programme has a modular structure, and a module typically focuses on four essays written by students based on guided reading supplied by the tutors who set and mark the assignments. To complement students' private study, lectures and seminars are arranged with the tutors at the beginning and end of each term. These meetings give tutors a chance to present an overview of the subject and of the particular focuses for subsequent study, as well as a chance to review the subject as a whole in the light of the work done over the term.

Originally these meetings were at St Benet's Hall; latterly they have been held in a number of other places. The academic level of the Programme is intended to be equivalent to that of a university degree course, and the tuition has generally been provided by experts in their respective fields from the University of Oxford. The Programme is validated by the University of Wales, Lampeter (UWL). Last summer the first two students, who have followed the programme right through, earned their Bachelor's degree. Other students have followed courses without seeking accreditation for them. Dom Henry reported on the programme to the 2005 General Chapter held at Buckfast Abbey. In the first four years of its existence, nine students have followed various modules within the programme. Numbers of students in our congregation are in any case small, but he noted that only a single E.B.C. student was at that time registered; a second has started this academic year.

Since the General Chapter, the Abbot President asked Dom David Foster to assist Dom Henry with the administration of the Programme. At the same time a review of the Programme is being undertaken together with UWL to ensure that it is as well adapted as possible to the various needs of monastic congregations, and fully in line with QAA regulations governing Higher Education. Observations on how the Programme can be a service to individual houses would be gratefully received. It is hoped a revised syllabus can be available for next academic year. News about developments will be circulated as soon as possible.

In the meantime, General Chapter asked for more information to be circulated to Abbots and communities about the existing Programme. The following prospectus aims to provide information about the structure and content of the Programme. If there are any questions or comments on it, please contact either Dom Henry or Dom David.

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PROSPECTUS

Aims of the Programme

- To provide a course in Catholic theology (and philosophy) for monastic students, both those who will proceed to Ordination, and those who will not, which can be followed in their own monastery or in other monastic houses
- To offer courses of degree standard adequate to the needs of students who will continue to undertake research
- To offer courses that may be followed to Certificate or Diploma level to those who are not intending to take a degree, but who require an adequate programme of study for monastic life
- To offer courses to other students who are interested in the study of theology in a monastic environment
- To provide a flexible range of courses that can be used in different ways as part of one of the plans already mentioned, or as part of a plan where the student will complete studies in another institute
- To encourage the study of theology in the houses of our Congregation by trying to involve monks and nuns in the teaching and accompaniment of learning in individual houses, and by arranging the meetings of the Course in the various houses of the Congregation

The character of the Programme

- The basic model of study is a modular Distance Learning Programme. It combines individual study with elements of teaching and direct contact, provided at the start and end of a module, as well as support for study and opportunities to discuss matters arising with tutors, and, where possible for the support of an individual student by a local tutor ('accompanied learning').
- This programme aims to provide a structure for a comprehensive theological education, so as to permit teachers and students in different places to collaborate in the teaching and study of theology.
- Such a programme helps cultivate a sense of the monastery as a place of learning, provide monastic students with a better sense of the intrinsic harmony between study and monastic life, and the best opportunity to promote the distinctively monastic approach to study.

Reasons for choosing the programme

- Its character as a distance-learning programme
 - Studies can be pursued in the student's own monastery
 - The studies of the individual houses can be supported, and other members of the community involved in various ways in the theological formation of its new members
 - It can easily be used as a framework for continuing theological and monastic formation
- The content of the programme:
 - The programme is a comprehensive programme of Catholic theology intended for the needs of those in monastic life.
 - The BA Programme is designed to reflect the emphases of monastic theology, with an emphasis on scripture, patristic tradition, liturgy and philosophy.
 - Private study and essay assignments train a habit of independent thought together with the acquisition of theological learning. There is also the chance to begin some theological specialisation as part of studies prior to ordination, which can be extended afterwards in various ways. One of the assumptions in the planning of the programme is the desirability of educating students to the level of scholarship of which they are capable.
 - The Programme is envisaged as a good preparation for other Graduate programmes, especially those offered by UWL.

Admission Criteria

- It is anticipated that all students will be mature students, and normally monks or nuns.
- Students will be expected to have a sufficient understanding of the Catholic faith and of worship, presupposed by the Specification for Level One courses.
- Students may be admitted as fulltime and as part-time students.
- Students will be accepted onto the course who have satisfied the Course Director that they are capable of the independent learning involved in the programme at the level for which they are applying. This may be done by examination or interview and on the basis of recommendation of those responsible for a person's religious formation or from others concerned with the applicant's prior education.

ACHIEVEMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

The delivery of the course

- Students will be enabled to achieve the intended learning outcomes through lectures and seminars, as well as the writing of essays based on a programme of guided reading.
- Each module is introduced by two lectures introducing the topic, the bibliography and scholarly discussion of it, as well as the assignments to be completed by the student.
- In the course of term, there is another lecture to further the study of the module, as well as a seminar discussion about the issues that have been studied.

The assessment of the learning outcome

- Students will demonstrate the achievement of the intended learning outcomes on the basis of four written assignments in each module, or a similar research-based task, of around 3000 words.
- Each of the two last essays forms 50% of the final mark in the module.
- An optional dissertation module is available, for those who have achieved an average mark of 2:1 or above. The details for this module will be as provided for in the UWL OLT Handbook (page 34).

CONTENT OF THE COURSE

Students for the Bachelor of Theology study 18 modules of 20 credits each. Full-time students will normally study two modules each term over three years; however they may be taken, full-time or part-time, over a maximum of ten years. Those offering a biblical language module may register for the Bachelor of Divinity.

Students with previous theological education can be exempted the first year of study and need only cover 12 modules. In the first year, the two philosophical modules (1-2) and one scriptural module (from 3-7) are obligatory. Other modules are studied in any order, but must include at least two further scriptural modules, one monastic module (11-14), two historical modules (10-19) and two doctrinal modules (8-10; 16-20). Courses marked with an asterisk * are taught at the same level as the others but are not accredited by UWL. Courses covering pastoral practice, homiletics and the like can be provided within this Programme or as arranged by individual Abbots.

1	Introduction to Philosophy	3OLT 25720-J	15 Friars and Universities	approved
2	Philosophy of Religion	3OLT 25620-J	16 Aquinas	3OLT 26420-J
3	The Old Testament to the Exile	3OLT 25520-J	17 The Reformation	approved
4	Old Testament Prophets	3OLT 26020-J	18 French Revolution to Vatican I	approved
5	The Synoptic Gospels	3OLT 26120-J	19 Vatican II	approved
6	The Gospel of John	approved	20 Dissertation	
7	The Letters of Paul	approved	21 Elementary Hebrew	3OLT 25020-J
8	Patristics I	approved	22 Further Hebrew	approved
9	Patristics II	approved	23 Moral Theology I	not accredited
10	Augustine	approved	24 Moral Theology II	not accredited
11	Origins of Monasticism	3OLT 25920-J	25 Canon Law	not accredited
12	Augustine to Cassian	3OLT 25220-J	26 Liturgy	not accredited
13	Monastic Rules to Benedict of Aniane	3OLT 25120-J	27 Sacramental Practice	not accredited
14	Bede to Bernard	approved		

SUPPORT FOR LEARNING

- Students will be given general support as to the nature of the programme and the courses they are following, including: descriptions of the component units and method of assessment, and explanation of the expectations on them for their studies.
- Tutors will also be given guidance as to the design, delivery and assessment of students' work.
- Students will be supported through libraries in their own monasteries, as well as through the Inter-Library Loan.
- It is understood that monasteries of individual students undertake to purchase the most important books needed for the study of their students.
- Students who are not members of monastic communities may be able to use local monastic library resources; or they will need to show that they have access to university libraries or their equivalent.
- Tutors are expected to provide enough guidance, including written (at least electronically available) materials needed by students, to acquire both a general understanding of the field of study and of the particular topics of their research.
- Arrangements will be made for tutors to be available to students to provide necessary guidance to students in their work. Most importantly, the tutor is responsible for providing adequate support for further study in the detailed written assessment he gives of each assignment.
- The Course Director or Course Administrator is also available to provide assistance, and to give constructive feedback on academic progress.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

- Quality assurance is ascertained
 - by marking of assignments by the tutor, second-marking by the Course Administrator (who may consult the Course Director) and moderation by UWL;
 - by the evaluation of the module by the tutor, as regards the structure of the module, and the progress made by students;
 - by the review of a course at the end of a module at a meeting between students and the Course Director and Administrator.
- Tutors and modules are approved by UWL
- The Academic Board which meets three times a year.
- UWL, which is included in the circulation of all documents relating to the Course and its development, is free to attend meetings of this Board.