
NEWS RELEASE

FROM THE OFFICE OF
THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY
LAMBETH PALACE T: 020 7898 1200
LONDON SE1 7JU F: 020 7261 1765

Embargoed until 11th September 2007

Archbishop launches new research degrees

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, has announced a new higher degree programme as an expansion of the Archbishop's Examination in Theology. Applications for PhD and MPhil degrees in Theology will be accepted from early 2008 with the first awards of the new MPhil degrees anticipated in 2012 and Doctorates shortly afterwards. Candidates will be examined to university standards in order to qualify.

The new programme, intended to run at a reasonable cost to the candidates, is an extension of a scheme begun over a century ago by Archbishop Randall Davidson, who established the Lambeth Diploma to allow women access to a theological qualification. The scheme was opened to men in the 1940s and Archbishop Runcie established an MA by thesis in 1990.

The scheme will be open to suitably qualified candidates and has been developed with Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) requirements and general university standards in mind, and in a form which provides easy access for students.

Dr Williams said that improving access to higher degree education was a crucial step for the development of the Church's theological resources:

"We have never had a greater need or a greater chance to extend the opportunity of higher degree theological education to those who might benefit from it. I'm confident that this scheme can go some way to overcome the barriers of cost, competition and access which stop good candidates being able to pursue this kind of detailed study. The Church as a whole has always needed and encouraged the study of theology at its deepest level and this scheme seeks to extend that possibility to those who otherwise wouldn't be able to take advantage of it."

There will be no changes to the Lambeth Diploma programme.

Notes for editors:

As the Archbishop of Canterbury's power to grant degrees derives from the Peter Pence Act of 1533 and requires confirmation from the Crown these degrees can only be awarded to those who can take the oath of allegiance to Her Majesty the Queen. Therefore recipients must be British subjects or nationals of countries in the Commonwealth who retain the Queen as head of state or, alternatively, who have dual nationality. The Archbishop of Canterbury has exercised this privilege sparingly over the years, with Lambeth doctorates and Masters degrees being awarded to highly deserving candidates.

Archbishop Randall Davidson used this legal framework to establish the Lambeth Diploma examination in 1905 as a means of allowing women access to a theological qualification and this to ministry. A further extension opened the examination to men, and in 1990 Archbishop Robert Runcie established the MA (Master of Arts) degree by thesis. The management of this educational provision has been the responsibility of the Committee of the Archbishop's Examination in Theology, its members being appointed by the Archbishop.

The Lambeth MPhil/PhD Awards Scheme is open to suitably qualified laity and clergy.

Application packs can be obtained from the Administration Office email: ruth.ruse@lambethpalace.org.uk