## FEEDBACK ON UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS TO THEOLOGY AND RELIGION

### INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the admissions process in the Faculty of Theology and Religion and contains generic statistical information from the 2022-23 UCAS cycle. This information is relevant to three BA courses: Theology and Religion (T&R); Philosophy and Theology (P&T); and Religion and Oriental Studies (ROS).[1] In some cases, statistics are withheld to protect the privacy of individuals within a very small cohort.

Individuals may request particular feedback on their own performance from the colleges to which they applied or where they were interviewed. It is hoped that the data supplied in this document will help candidates and referees to understand an individual performance in the context of a very competitive field of applications and a complex process.

Requests for clarification and further information should be directed to colleges in the first instance but the Faculty of Theology and Religion may be contacted via general.administrator@theology.ox.ac.uk. The Faculty is unable to comment on individual applications.

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[1] Note that the title of this degree is changing and future students will be admitted to the BA in Religion and Asian and Middle Eastern Studies. The former degree title is retained in this report, however, in agreement with the UCAS course codes and titles used in applications submitted October 2022.

## NUMBERS OF CANDIDATES AND RATES OF PROGRESSION

**Table 1: Number of candidates and rates of progression through the admissions process for each course, for different cohorts as defined by application course and offer course, taking account of transfer between courses during the admissions process**

| | T&R Offers Inc all Applicants | T&R applicants only | P&T Offers | P&T Applicants for any offer | ROS Offers | Combined T&R and P&T |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **APPLICATIONS** | 106 | 97 | 157 | 157 | Data withheld to protect privacy of small cohort. | **254** |
| **SHORTLISTED CANDIDATES** | 69 | 65 | 63 | 67 | | **132** |
| **OFFERS including Open Offers** | 42 | 36 | 28 | 34 | | **70** |
| % Applicants invited to interview | 65.1% | 67.0% | 40.1% | 42.7% | | **52.0%** |
| % Applicants offered a place | 39.6% | 37.1% | 17.8% | 21.7% | | **27.6%** |
| % Shortlisted offered a place | 60.9% | 55.4% | 44.4% | 50.7% | | **53.0%** |
| Applications received per offer | 2.5 | 2.7 | 5.6 | 4.6 | 3.0 | **3.6** |

**NOTES:**

➢ Application figures include all submitted applications, including any that were incomplete or withdrawn before shortlisting.

➢ Shortlisting figures include all shortlisted application, including any which were withdrawn after shortlisting.

➢ Offer figures include any open offers and offers for deferred entry.

➢ A small but significant number of applicants to P&T were either transferred to T&R at shortlisting or the offer a place in T&R. In Table 1, the figures in the two columns headed 'T&R Offers including all Applicants' and 'P&T Applicants for any Offer' include P&T applicants who were interviewed and/or offered a place in T&R

BREAKDOWN OF APPLICANTS BY SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS

**Table 2: Number of applicants with a selected <u>characteristic</u> and also that number of applicants as a percentage of the application cohort**

| | Total Applicants | Female Applicants | | Male Applicants | | International Applicants | | Applications for deferred entry | | Open applications | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **T&R** | 97 | 52 | 53.6% | 45 | 46.4% | 12 | 12.4% | 0 | 0.0% | 9 | 9.3% |
| **P&T** | 157 | 94 | 59.9% | 63 | 40.1% | 21 | 13.4% | 4 | 2.5% | 24 | 15.3% |
| **ROS** | | | 33.3% | | 66.7% | | 66.7% | | 33.3% | | 0.0% |

\* An open application does not specify a preferred college but is assigned to a college according to college capacities once it has been received by the University.

## SHORTLISTING PROCEDURE

All applications are assessed individually and in full by tutors, both at the college that has received the application and by an intercollegiate Faculty Admissions Committee. Final shortlisting decisions rest with college tutors but tutors in all colleges commit to working together to achieve a fair outcome and the work of the Faculty committee helps to ensure parity of standards across colleges. **The Faculty does not apply specific weighting measures to the various components of an application but the whole of each application is assessed on its relative merit in relation to the following published criteria.**

For any BA degree in the Faculty of Theology and Religion, candidates must:

➢ submit a strong UCAS form, including a supportive reference, excellent past examination results, and[/or] the predicted 3 'A' grades at A-level or equivalent.
➢ submit written work which demonstrates:

1) the ability to think clearly and to reason coherently,
2) evidence of independence of thought,
3) the ability to structure work and arguments in a logical way,
4) the ability to write clearly (and grammatically), with clear expression of thought.

Additionally, for applications to Philosophy and Theology, tutors will take into account each candidate's performance in the Philosophy Test. For applications to Religion and Oriental Studies, specialising in Islam/Arabic or Judaism/Hebrew, tutors will take into account each candidate's performance in the Oriental Studies Language Aptitude Test (OLAT).

The Faculty's use of contextual data throughout the admissions process accords with University's published statement, summarised at https://ox.ac.uk/context.

After shortlisting, but before candidates are invited to interview, some candidates are reallocated to a different college. This helps to ensure that no candidate is unfairly disadvantaged, for example by application to an especially oversubscribed college. The Faculty considers reallocation (where implemented) to be in an applicant's best interests and effective in ensuring parity of standards and in the treatment of candidates across colleges.

Applications to Philosophy and Theology which will not be shortlisted for that course are further considered for shortlisting for Theology and Religion. The most usual reasons for course transfer are because (i) Theology and Religion tutors are confident of an applicant's aptitude in Theology independent of Philosophy and consider that candidate's application to be competitive in the Theology and Religion field and (ii) there is greater capacity for interviewing and places on the Theology and Religion course.

The selection criteria are published and further information about these processes is provided in answers to FAQs on the Faculty Website, https://www.theology.ox.ac.uk/undergraduate-faqs.

## THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

Every shortlisted candidate was interviewed by the college which called them to interview and by one other college. Second colleges are allocated according to college capacity by an automated process and then adjusted to eliminate procedural difficulties, e.g. ensuring that non-mature applicants have not been allocated to mature-only colleges.

All interviews were, this year, conducted over MS Teams. The precise scheduling and format of interviews may vary between colleges but the following is expected:

➢ Theology and Religion candidates received at least one interview at each of two colleges.

➢ Philosophy and Theology candidates received at least one Philosophy interview and one Theology/Religion interview at each of two colleges. Note that, alternatively, some colleges combined both subjects (Philosophy and Theology) in a single interview.

➢ Religion and Oriental Studies candidates receive at least one Theology /Religion interview at each of two colleges, alongside an interview at the Faculty of Oriental Studies. Some colleges also invited applicants to an Oriental Studies interview.

At interview, Theology and Religion tutors assess candidates according to the following published criteria:

➢ an ability to think clearly, including understanding complex concepts, forming sound arguments, and listening and responding to counterarguments.

➢ an openness to learning.

➢ an ability at close textual reading and interpretation.

➢ evidence of enthusiasm and/or motivation, including dedication and diligence in work, and evidence of independent thought and reading.

➢ an ability to develop ideas presented in their submitted written work.

➢ oral communications skills.

Tutors are encouraged to represent and record their assessment of interview performance as a numerical mark with reference to the above criteria and on the following scale:

| | |
|---|---|
| 70-80 | Outstanding interview |
| 60-69 | Competent to very impressive interview; |
| 51–59 | Poor interview |
| 40–50 | Very poor interview |

It is worth noting, however, that assessment of interview performance is a *qualitative* academic judgement and only one element of tutors' evaluation of a candidate.

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## DECISION MAKING

Based on all the information available, with reference to the selection criteria detailed above (for <u>both</u> the pre-interview and interview stages) and in accordance with their academic judgement, tutors at each college identify those candidates they believe to be most deserving of an offer/place.

All college tutors meet in a final faculty meeting to declare their decisions. Where a candidate does not receive an offer from the college that called him/her to interview, that candidate becomes available to the second college and may receive an offer from that college.

College tutors collectively scrutinise the decisions being made and review data on all shortlisted applicants to ensure fair treatment, to avoid mistakes and to minimise the risk of any candidate being unduly neglected. Tutors also consult and collaborate to identify candidates to receive "open" offers, which could be ultimately realised as places at a number of different colleges.

## STATISTICS RELATING TO QUANTITATIVE DATA

### GCSE STATISTICS

**Table 3: GCSE Statistics for T&R and P&T at each principal stage of the admissions process – application, shortlisting and offer.**

| T&R | | | | P&T | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **App** | **Short** | **Offer** | | **App** | **Short** | **Offer** |
| Number of GCSEs | | | | | | |
| 5-13 | 5-13 | 7-13 | Range | 6-14 | 6-12 | 8-11 |
| 9.9 | 9.9 | 9.9 | 9.9 | 9.7 | 9.8 | 9.9 |
| 10.0 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 10.0 |
| 10.0 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 10.0 |
| 1.1 | 1.1 | 1.1 | 1.1 | 1.1 | 1.1 | 0.8 |
| Number of 8/9/A* GCSE grades | | | | | | |
| 0-13 | 2-13 | 2-13 | Range | 0-14 | 1-12 | 1-11 |
| 7.9 | 8.5 | 8.8 | Mean Average | 7.2 | 7.8 | 8.4 |
| 10.0 | 10.0 | 10.0 | Mode | 10.0 | 10.0 | 10.0 |
| 9.0 | 9.0 | 9.5 | Median | 8.0 | 9.0 | 9.5 |
| 2.7 | 2.4 | 2.4 | Standard deviation | 3.1 | 2.8 | 2.6 |

These figures are provided for only that portion of the cohort applying with _5 or more_ GCSEs, i.e. where GCSEs are the applicants principal pre-16 qualification.

Note that since none of T&R, P&T or ROS require the study of a particular subject or subjects at A Level or equivalent, A Level subject data has not been compiled formally for this report. A wide range of A Level (and equivalent) subjects are represented on applications considered throughout the process.

### WRITTEN WORK

**Table 4: Written Work Statistics for T&R and P&T at each principal stage of the admissions process – application, shortlisting and offer. (Marks are out of 100, zero scores omitted.)**

| T&R | | | | P&T | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **App** | **Short** | **Offer** | | **App** | **Short** | **Offer** |
| 58-75 | 58-75 | 58-75 | Range of marks | 56-73 | 60-73 | 60-73 |
| 65.6 | 66.6 | 66.8 | Mean Average | 64.3 | 65.3 | 66.7 |
| 63.0 | 69.0 | 69.0 | Mode | 62.0 | 62.0 | 66.0 |
| 64.0 | 67.0 | 67.0 | Median | 63.0 | 65.0 | 67.0 |
| 4.2 | 4.1 | 4.2 | Standard deviation | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.9 |

THE PHILOSOPHY TEST

**Table 5: Philosophy Test Statistics in 2021-22 at each principal stage of the admissions process – application, shortlisting and offer. (Marks are out of 100, zero scores omitted.)**

|  | Application | Shortlisting | Offer |
|---|---|---|---|
| Range of marks | 50-71 | 60-71 | 60-70 |
| Mean Average | 64.6 | 66.9 | 66.6 |
| Mode | 65.0 | 67.0 | 67.0 |
| Median | 65.0 | 67.0 | 67.0 |
| Standard deviation | 3.5 | 2.5 | 2.7 |

**Graph 1: Distribution of Philosophy test scores of candidates at each principal stage of the admissions process for Philosophy and Theology.**
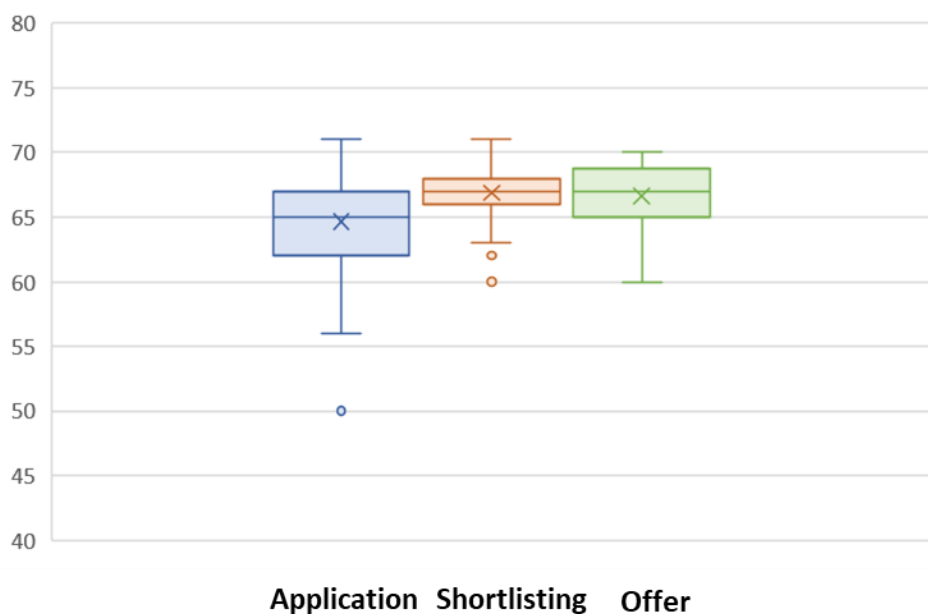


Scores for the following the Philosophy Test will be automatically distributed to all applicants shortly after college decision letters are sent in January. You do not need to request your own Test Score.