

Archbishop of Canterbury's Statement on Postgraduate Degrees by Research

The Church of England has a long tradition of sound, critical and reflective theological scholarship. Anglican theologians, in England and in the wider Anglican Communion, continue to contribute substantially to the body of theological research, conducted today in the spirit of ecumenical partnership and inter-faith dialogue. This research focuses on major questions which affect theological understanding, in such areas as the Trinitarian doctrine of God, ecclesiology, history, biblical studies, sacramental theology, liturgy, practical theology, spirituality, the study of religion, canon law and ethics. In many of these contexts it is clear that an inter-disciplinary approach is important: collaboration between the theologian and the sociologist, lawyer, philosopher or artist, or with members of the caring professions, is more and more the norm, and rightly so.

It has been the privilege of the Archbishop of Canterbury to award degrees and diplomas in his own right according to the statutory powers conferred on him by Parliament in 1533. The Archbishop uses these powers traditionally to confer doctorates and masters' degrees *honoris causa* on worthy recipients. Within this legal framework Archbishop Randall Davidson established the Lambeth Diploma examination in 1905 as a means of allowing women access to a theological qualification and thus to ministry. A further extension opened the examination to men, and in 1990 Archbishop Robert Runcie established the MA degree by thesis.

In 2007 Archbishop Rowan Williams extended the scheme again, this time into the provision of higher research degrees, MPhil and PhD. The goal was to encourage theological scholarship through disciplined study programmes involving research, that could help to resource the mission and ministry of the Church for the future. Theological scholarship here is broadly conceived to include all the major disciplines of Christian theology as well as the sociological, anthropological, ethnographic, and literary, study of the Christian religion. The MPhil and PhD awards have been developed with Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) requirements and general university standards in mind, and in a form which provides easy access for students, especially those who might in some way be disadvantaged by the conventional university system. The management of this educational provision is the responsibility of the Council of the Archbishop's Examination in Theology, whose members I appoint. I am most grateful to them for their 'labour of love'.

The Lambeth MPhil/PhD awards contribute to the Church's commitment to lifelong learning, and are open to suitably qualified and eligible laity and clergy alike. I would underline that this opportunity is open to people from all walks of life; indeed we are especially keen to support those whose constituencies might be under-represented in our churches and universities. I am pleased to support this initiative, in the hope that it will help the churches to reflect on the challenges they face in contemporary society, and to resource their response to those challenges with the aid of the riches of Scripture and tradition.

19th September 2019