



MA in Church Law at St Stephen's House

St Stephen's House is proud to offer the opportunity to study for a Master of Arts degree in Church Law through the Common Awards, accredited by the University of Durham. We are currently one of only two institutions in Britain offering this degree.

The course covers all dimensions of ecclesiastical law, from its sources and history to the legal regulation of the Church's rites, sacraments, and doctrines, as well as questions of church governance in terms of both administrative structures and relations to the contemporary state including matters of Church property. Our focus is on the law of the Church of England alongside comparisons with the laws of other Anglican churches and those of other ecclesial traditions including the Roman Catholic Church. The assessment aspect of the degree offers the opportunity to consider the laws of any church, as well as to delve into historical, ecumenical, or jurisprudential questions. As the teaching takes place in a residential theological college, the course also provides the opportunity for theological reflection on legal study, and its relevance to mission and pastoral practice today.

Interested lay Christians, ordained ministers, practicing lawyers, and students of law or theology are all welcome to apply, whether seeking an introduction to the field, or professional or ministerial development.

Teaching team

The course director is the Revd Stephen Coleman, an honorary research fellow and tutor in Canon Law at St Stephen's House, and priest-in-charge of Grosvenor Chapel, Mayfair, in the Diocese of London. He is also the assistant director of the Centre for Law and Religion at Cardiff University, a member of the editorial board of the Ecclesiastical Law Journal, and practises ecclesiastical law as a part time solicitor at Birketts LLP.

The seminars will also be led by other legal academics and practitioners in the field including **Professor Norman Doe KC LLD FBA**, professor of law at the School of Law and Politics, Cardiff University, Chancellor of the Diocese of Bangor in the Church in Wales, and Master of the Bench at the Inner Temple in London.

Academic Programme

Core Modules

The MA degree consists of six modules plus a dissertation, with two years of teaching followed by a year of supervision for the completion of the dissertation.

Year A	Year B
The Law of Doctrine and Liturgy	Research and Reflection: Resources and Methods
The Law of Rites and Sacraments	The Law of Church Governance
The Law of Ministry	The Law of Church-State Relations

Years A and B are taught in alternating years, so that cohorts in their first and second years can mix and gain from each other's experience.

Research and Reflection is examined by two 3,000-word essays, and all other modules are examined by one 5,000-word essay.

Descriptions of all of these modules are available through the links [here](#).

Residentials

The programme is designed to allow for intensive study by professionals currently engaged in practice, and will be delivered in three intensive residential sessions each academic year, each session focussing on one module.

These sessions will be held at St Stephen's House in Oxford, and each session will begin after lunch on a Thursday and will conclude at lunchtime on Saturday. The residence period includes a formal dinner on Thursday evening, as well as the opportunity to join in corporate worship of the college at the eucharist, as well as morning and evening prayer.

Residential dates for 2026/27

Thursday 5 – Saturday 7 November 2026

Thursday 11 – Saturday 13 March 2027

Thursday 10 – Saturday 12 June 2027

Dissertation

The MA degree is completed by the submission of a 12,000 word dissertation, completed under the supervision of a course tutor over a third year.

Full Regulations

Full details of the programme regulations are available [here](#).

Entry Requirements

The closing date for applications is Friday of 0th week in Oxford University's Michaelmas Term, which this year is the 9th of October.

The admissions requirement for the MA in Church Law is normally an upper second class Honours degree or equivalent in a subject relevant to the proposed course of study. Normally students will need a good degree (or other level 6 qualification, such as a Graduate Diploma) in theology or law or similar, although graduates (classed as first-class or 2:1 honours) in other disciplines with experience of theology or religious studies or law to at least undergraduate Certificate level (awarded with credit or distinction, or with an overall mark of at least 60%) may also be admitted to the programme. However, especially for mature students, prior professional experience may be taken into account. Students are likely to be preparing for a ministerial or related vocation or be actively engaged in such a profession.

If any of the normal requirements would prevent your taking the course, but you have appropriate professional experience, please contact the Admissions secretary, admissions@ssho.ac.uk, and we will be happy to offer advice on making an application.

Other Regulations

In general, up to a maximum of 60 credits of accredited prior learning may be granted to students who have evidence of, or can demonstrate learning that fulfils, the relevant learning outcomes of the Master's programme (by completing a portfolio of work, for example).

Students for whom English is their second language should have achieved a score of 7.0 with no component under 6.5 in an IELTS examination, or equivalent.

The overarching entry requirements for the Common Awards are available [here](#), and the St Stephen's House Admissions policy is available [here](#).

Overseas Students

St Stephen's House is not in a position to sponsor Tier 4 student visas through this degree. It is possible, however, to complete the residential elements of the course while residing at the college without a Student Visa, provided that you hold either a Standard Visitor Visa or an electronic travel authorisation (ETA). For visa purposes, it is important that this not form part of a period of residence in the United Kingdom of longer than six months.

If you are or will be resident in the United Kingdom on a different visa, please contact the college to enquire about options. We will ensure that appropriate legal advice is sought, if necessary.

Costs

Fees

Year One	Year Two	Year Three
£4225	£4225	£1208

Residential Costs

The residential costs include catering for the period of your stay. St Stephen's House will provide a formal dinner on Thursday evening, three meals on Friday, and brunch on Saturday. For the past academic year, costs for residence were:

Standard Accommodation: £131.60 per residential session

En-Suite Accommodation: £149.60 per residential session

Please note that these are indicative costs for the coming academic year. Final costs will be available following the Spring meeting of the St Stephen's House Finance and General Purposes Committee, and will be available from the end of June 2026. Costs are subject to review and may be subject to change.