



To all students who have taken a Certificate Programme course since September 2006

This letter is to explain the changes which the University of Cambridge is introducing to the Certificate Programme from September 2010, and also to let you know what credit bearing courses we will be offering in St Albans in the forthcoming academic year. There is also news of two developments at StACCS which we hope will ease the transition to the new system.

Why are changes being made?

For many years courses in the adult continuing education programmes offered by all the universities have received financial support from the government. From next academic year this support has been withdrawn (although a small number of courses and students will still qualify, the courses offered by Cambridge through the certificate programme will not attract any subsidy). Many universities have decided to close their continuing education departments, but Cambridge has decided to continue. For students the main impact will be financial: the cost of courses will rise significantly.

The University of Cambridge has also decided to re-organise its continuing education service and integrate it fully into the central university structure. For students the main impact will be to change the way in which course administration is handled from enrolment to the submission of assignments.

The four main changes

- 1) The cost of courses
- 2) The structure of the certificate programme
- 3) The enrolment procedure
- 4) The move to online administration

1) The cost of courses

In the academic year 2010 to 2011 the cost of a ten week course (carrying the possibility of ten credits) will be £150. This compares with a cost of £85 for the same course in the current year. We have expressed our concern over the level of the fees to Cambridge, but they believe that they have

set the fees at the lowest possible level, having introduced major cost-saving changes at Madingley Hall. We are concerned that many of our students will feel unable to take courses with fees at this level, but have agreed to offer the programme next year to test the impact of the increase. We have also introduced a bursary scheme, which is described below. Our initial enquiries with other universities and academic institutions indicate that Cambridge is among the cheapest for credit bearing courses, but we will continue to monitor and review the position.

2) The structure of the Certificate Programme

Since 2006 the certificate programme has been built around 3 core modules, two of which have been 15 week, 15 credit courses, normally taken in the same academic year. Recognising the problem of much higher fees, we have restructured the programme to replace the two 15 week courses with three ten week courses. The new courses will have substantially the same content as the older courses, but by splitting them we allow students the opportunity to spread the costs and take the core modules on a more flexible timetable.

The new certificate programme will therefore look like this:

There are four core modules, of which we will offer **two** each academic year. Core modules may be taken in any order.

1: Sources for Theology (The Bible)

Students are introduced to the structure, purpose and themes of the New Testament books. The module also introduces the Old Testament outlining the style, purpose and theologies of the books it contains.

2: Introduction to Christian Doctrine Introduces students to the Christian understanding of God, creation and humanity as they examine the classical Christian creeds.

3: The Christian Understanding of Jesus

A more detailed and historically focused survey of the way in which Christians have understood Jesus, covering issues such as the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection.

4: Being Christian Today

Just over half the course introduces the study of Christian ethics. In the rest students explore questions around the areas of mission, vocation, worship and spirituality.

As at present, students will also need to take two optional modules to gain the required total of 60 credits. We will offer at least two, and usually more than two, optional modules each academic year.

It is very important that students who have taken core modules in past years do not enrol for the new core modules on the basis that they are new courses: if you do, you will not be eligible for credit and you will find that the content of the courses is substantially material that you have already studied. If in doubt, please speak to us before enrolling.

3) The enrolment procedure

In the past students have enrolled for courses with Local Centres, like StACCS, which have acted on behalf of the university. The Local Centres have forwarded student details and fees to Cambridge, and handled most enquiries from students during and after courses. For courses beginning from September 2010, as part of the restructuring of the adult continuing education programme, students will be required to deal directly with Cambridge. Under the new arrangements the system will work as follows:

The role of StACCS

- StACCS will continue to organise courses in the theological studies programme, promote and advertise them locally.
- StACCS will handle enquiries from students about forthcoming courses and make enrolment forms available to those who request them (and are unable to access them online).
- StACCS will offer students local support during courses: please see below for more details.
- StACCS will offer a bursary scheme to assist students who might otherwise be unable to take a course.

The role of Madingley Hall, The Institute for Continuing Education in Cambridge

- Students must enrol for all courses directly with Madingley Hall.
- Madingley Hall will handle all fees and payments directly.
- Madingley Hall will handle all enquiries from students relating to enrolment, fees, and the administration of courses.

4) The move to online administration

As part of the restructuring and cost saving exercise, Madingley Hall is moving towards online administration for all its courses. Enrolment for 2010-2011 courses will be available via the Madingley Hall web site from early June 2010. It will be possible both to enrol and to pay on line. Tutors will also have the opportunity to post information, hand outs and other course material on a course web page available only to enrolled students. It will remain possible to book by post using a paper form (available from StACCS or Madingley Hall) and send payments by cheque. StACCS will not be able to assist students with online enrolment, and we will not have access to enrolment information to answer queries (such as whether places are still available on particular courses). The Madingley Hall web site is:

www.ice.cam.ac.uk

Introducing the StACCS Bursary Scheme

In the past when StACCS collected fees on behalf of Madingley Hall, we were able to offer students with difficulty in paying for courses a range of flexible payment methods. However, under the new system we are unable to help in this way. As an educational charity we have explored ways in which we can continue to offer some support for students who would like to study with us on courses offered by Cambridge. The Bursary Scheme is the outcome of our efforts to date, but we continue to consider further options.

What does the Bursary Scheme offer students?

Qualifying students can apply for a bursary which will typically fund up to a third of the course fee. In 2010-2011 the fee for a ten credit course with the Institute is £150, so a typical bursary award could be £50. The bursary is paid by StACCS to the student who must pay the full fee directly to Madingley Hall in Cambridge. Normally the bursary will be paid to the student when evidence is produced that the student has paid the full fee to the Institute, but in exceptional circumstances the bursary may be paid in advance, at the discretion of the Director of StACCS, if a student simply cannot afford the full fee any other way.

Who can apply for a bursary?

Anyone who is registered with StACCS as a student on the certificate programme can apply for a bursary: this is explained fully below. You should apply to StACCS for a bursary *before* you enrol with the Institute, and you should make a separate application for each module you plan to take. StACCS has decided not to apply any formal or means-tested criteria for eligibility: such fixed rules often exclude people who might need assistance, or open support to others who in fact do not need it. We ask students to make a case for support and each case will be considered on its merits. Typically people with no means of support other than state benefits, people on low wages and people whose children are in receipt of free school meals would qualify for a full bursary. The award of a bursary for one module does not guarantee an award for future modules. Applications for bursaries must be accompanied by a reference or letter of support and we ask students to explore other sources of funding (for example support from a local church or grant making body).

How does StACCS fund bursaries?

StACCS has obtained a modest amount of funding to set up an initial bursary scheme for 2010-11. It is hoped that we will be able to secure support for future years. We have limited resources available and may not be able to offer support for every application.

How can I apply for a bursary?

To apply for a bursary, please complete the Bursary Scheme Application Form (available from the StACCS web site or by post from the office) and send it to the StACCS office by post along with a letter of support.

Letters of support

We ask students applying for a bursary to provide a letter of support along with their application. For students with a church link, the letter might be provided by their priest, minister or pastor; for other students it could be a friend or neighbour, or an employer. We are simply looking for someone other than the student who can confirm (a) that the student is committed to the course and (b) would find it hard to meet the fee without assistance. StACCS *may* contact the person providing the letter of support, but would never disclose to that person anything mentioned by the student on the application form.

How quickly will I hear if I have been awarded a bursary?

StACCS undertakes to process all bursary requests as quickly as possible, and usually within 10 working days of receipt at the office.

Register with StACCS for local support and advice

One of our most serious concerns with the forthcoming changes has been the way in which it could easily cut the link between StACCS and our local students. Once the enrolment and course administration has been moved to Cambridge, we will have little knowledge of who is studying on courses we arrange and facilitate, particularly when the course is taught by a tutor from Cambridge. We value the personal connection with our students, and we believe that our students have enjoyed the sense of being part of a locally-based, educational community. In order to continue to develop this relationship between StACCS and students studying for credit bearing courses, we are introducing, with the support and encouragement of Madingley Hall, a new way of being part of StACCS when studying with Cambridge.

People interested in studying on the certificate programme are invited and encouraged to register with StACCS as a student. Although you can still take the courses without registering, there are several important benefits:

- We are able to offer qualifying students bursaries towards the cost of courses;
- registered students are enrolled as members of the Hudson Library (the Abbey's theological lending library) free for the first year and at a substantial discount in future years;
- registered students will be invited to attend a number of annual events in St Albans which are not open to the public, and to apply for places at some other events before public booking is open;
- registered students have access to local support in the area of study skills and producing written work.
- Registered students will also be regarded as 'members' of StACCS, consulted about new initiatives and developments and encouraged to offer ideas and suggestions for future work.

Registration is free and you can register as a certificate student before enrolling on any of the courses.

Along with this letter you will find a leaflet detailing all of the credit bearing courses which are planned for 2010-11. If you think you may enrol on future credit bearing courses in St Albans, please complete and return the form on the leaflet, or send the information to us by email, to info@christianstudies.org.uk . If we do not hear from you, we will assume that you are not planning to study with us for the foreseeable future.

Enrolment for courses planned for St Albans will open on the Madingley Hall web site from June.

If you have any questions or concerns about the changes, please contact us on:

01727 890205 or info@christianstudies.org.uk