



Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

UG Religion

Senior Sophister

Capstone Project

Handbook

2026-27

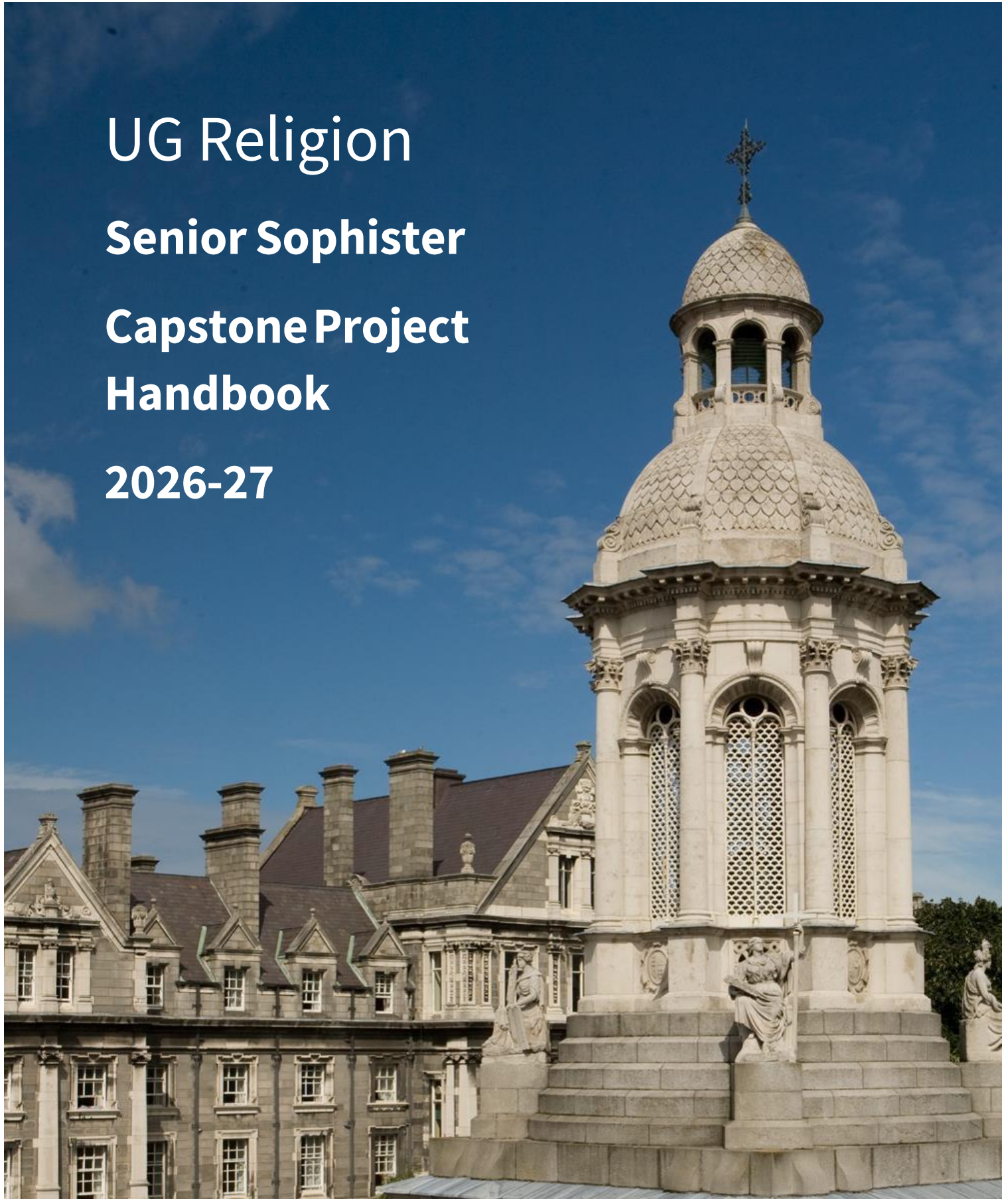


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1. GENERAL INFORMATION

All Senior Sophisters are required to take a 20-credit, year-long module in which they produce independent research, referred to as a *capstone project*. This constitutes one third of the final year's work and credits (20/60); the remaining credits will consist of Sophister module options.

A capstone is a project 'that provides students with an opportunity to integrate the knowledge, skills and competencies which they have acquired during their undergraduate studies, and to demonstrate these in a form appropriate to the discipline'.

In Religion, the Capstone Module allows students to consolidate their learning across the programme by writing a dissertation investigating in-depth a specific topic. The module provides students with the opportunity to work and think independently, while at the same time experiencing a research community and receiving constructive feedback from peers and staff.

Students learn to process feedback in creative ways, discuss general and specific problems occurring in the research process and find appropriate solutions to them, and to identify and meet the academic standards pertaining to their chosen field of investigation.

Module Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

1. Identify a research topic, formulate viable research questions and goals, and develop an adequate methodology.
2. Find, assess, contextualise, and analyse critically primary and secondary sources and produce an annotated bibliography.
3. Conduct self-directed, original research; give and process constructive feedback from a diversity of perspectives.
4. Apply concept and argument? for discussion and interpretation of the findings.

5. Draw conclusions and critically discuss them based on existing scholarship and the evidence provided.
6. Present their research effectively and in compliance with the academic standards of their chosen field of investigation.

Module Content

All Senior Sophister students (Single Hons, as well as Joint Hons students, and Religion Majors who choose to focus on Religion in their capstone) are required to write a dissertation of **10,000 – 12,000 words. The word count includes footnotes, but excludes the final bibliography**. The capstone module will support students with the process of producing this self-directed project. It complements the cooperation between the student and their supervisor.

This process begins at the end of JS year when students contact their possible supervisors and agree on a topic. A proposal with a preliminary title, a rough structure and initial list of literature is required and should be submitted during Hilary Term (Semester B) of the JS Year. Over the summer between JS and SS years, preparatory work can be done, especially when fieldwork, collection of data or extensive literature research or translation is involved.

The Capstone Seminar takes place in the Senior Sophister Year and offers scheduled 4-6 meetings per semester; it supports the process by providing tailored workshops.

Discussing diverse topics and formats (such as case studies, philosophical and theological discussion, philological work etc.) will improve interdisciplinary work skills and will help to refine the research question and tackle problems that researchers share across the approaches they take. Participation in the activities of the seminar meetings, proactive communication with the supervisor, self-motivated conduct of the project; and on time submission of chapters are seen as crucial evidence of students' engagement in the learning process and contribute to the final mark.

Teaching and Learning Format

Self-directed research and dissertation writing; Capstone Seminar, workshop presentations, panel discussions, peer review and feedback, problem-oriented input by staff, four tutorials or other forms of individual supervision.

Assessment

Each dissertation will be read, evaluated and given an agreed mark by your supervisor and one other member of staff. Senior Sophister dissertations and the reports of supervisor and moderator are then reviewed by the External Examiners and addressed at the School Court of Examiners.

Marking Scale

First Class	I	over 70%
Second Class, First Division	II.1	60 - 69%
Second Class, Second Division	II.2	50 - 59%
Third Class	III	40-49%
Fail	F1	30-39%
	F2	less than 30%

For more information on these classifications, see the BA Religion Handbook on the School [Current Students page](#).

Key Contacts

Capstone Project	Name	Email
Capstone Coordinator (Course Coordinator)	Dr. David Shepherd	shepherd@tcd.ie
Director of Undergraduate Teaching and Learning (DUTL)	Dr. Alexandra Grieser	griesera@tcd.ie
UG Executive Officer	Dominique Plant	srundergrad@tcd.ie

Accessibility and Support

In the School of Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies, we are committed to providing and maintaining an inclusive learning environment for all our students. One of the ways we do this is through working closely with the Trinity Disability Service. If you have a disability, a mental health condition, or an ongoing illness or medical condition, the Disability Service is there to support you.

Through registering with the Disability Service, you will be able to discuss your experience of and needs in College, including accommodations in learning and exams. The Disability Service can then tell us, while respecting your confidentiality at all times, whether there are changes we can make to teaching and assessment which will support you. For more information on the Disability Service and how to register, visit the [Trinity disAbility Service website](#), and you can also contact your Tutor, who can advise and assist you.

2. TIMELINE AND PROCESS FOR PROPOSING YOUR CAPSTONE (JUNIOR SOPHISTER YEAR)

Students who take up a capstone project in Religion are free to choose a research topic and approach a potential supervisor who is familiar with the subject area and the approach that the student intends to take. While some departments in College allocate capstone supervisors, Religion allows for and encourages student-led interest and supervisor agreement.

- ✓ **Week 3 Hilary term (Semester B in JS Year):** Approach potential supervisors for your topic early in Hilary term, as some staff members may reach a limit of students they can advise, while others may be on Research Leave.

Course Meeting to explain the Capstone, possibilities, and the process of approaching potential supervisors.

***Trinity Joint Honours students** will need to choose their Capstone Subject at the beginning of Hilary Term (**19 January 2026**). Please follow all instructions from the TJH Office on Capstone selection. More information can be found [here](#).

- ✓ **Weeks 4-6 Hilary Term**

Email and meet with an appropriate member of staff as a potential supervisor to discuss your project.

- ✓ **Week 13 Hilary Term**

Students should meet with their supervisor to agree on a work plan for the summer.

- ✓ **Week 16 Hilary Term**

The capstone project proposals must be submitted to the Undergraduate Officer by Microsoft Forms through the link [Junior Sophister Capstone Project Proposal 2026/27 – Fill out form](#). If you encounter any issues with the form or submission process, please contact the Undergraduate Officer at SRUndergrad@tcd.ie. You should have already sought advice from a member of the academic staff about your proposal and have an

agreed-upon supervisor. The proposal or the dissertation model should be around 500 words long and include a tentative title and a short bibliography (ca. 5 titles).

3. CAPSTONE SEMINARS AND ADVISOR TUTORIAL MEETINGS

As part of the Capstone Project, students are expected to agree with their supervisor to meet to discuss their project on a regular basis. The number and length of meetings of these **Tutorial Meetings** will depend on each student's contract with their supervisor. It is important to give your supervisor time to read work you have written and to submit work regularly so that discussions can be productive. These meetings form a core part of the research experience and students are expected to be in regular contact with their advisor throughout the year.

On multiple occasions in their Sophister Year, Capstone Students will gather together to participate in the required **Capstone Seminar**. During the Seminar, students will benefit from a variety of sessions focused on e.g. library resources, writing practice, learning from peers, academic integrity, and the editing process. The focus lies on eliciting and receiving feedback on students' work-in-progress and supporting each other in the writing process. Students are enrolled in **REU44010 DISSERTATION** on Blackboard, and Capstone Seminar meeting dates will be posted there at the beginning of Michaelmas Term.

Timelines and Deadlines for Submission

Students will agree with their supervisors a timeline for production of the dissertation. This should include:

- (a) the drafting of a preliminary outline and a working bibliography of primary and secondary sources early in Michaelmas Term of the Senior Sophister year, as well as an agreed-upon critical approach and methodology for the dissertation

(b) specific deadlines for the completion of individual sections or chapters in the dissertation over the course of Michaelmas and Hilary Terms. The number of chapters or sections will vary from dissertation to dissertation.

(c) The dissertation must be submitted by all students no later than noon on Friday of Week 9 of Hilary Term to Blackboard (March 19th, 2027).

Be aware that most staff have multiple students to supervise and may not be able to read drafts from all of them in the weeks immediately before the deadline.

A possible schedule of work might be as follows (note that this is only an example and not intended to be prescriptive):

Michaelmas Term Senior Sophister Year:

Week 1 – meet supervisor, discuss work done over summer, agree plan of work.

- Week 4 – submit initial draft of writing (introduction, detailed plan or other work, as agreed).
- Week 11 – submit draft of first full chapter (c. 3000 words).

Hilary Term Senior Sophister Year:

- Week 1 – submit draft of a second piece of work/chapter for discussion/feedback.
- Week 5 – submit redraft/work/re-written introduction and conclusions for discussion in week 6.
- Week 7 – submit full draft of dissertation to supervisor.
- Weeks 7-9 – revise and redraft final version following supervisor feedback.
- Week 9 – submit final dissertation.

At the end of each Academic Year, the coordinators discuss and adapt this important part of the BA Religion studies. Providing you with an anonymous form for receiving your feedback to both, the dissertation seminar and the tutorial meetings, we feed your responses into the college quality management and develop our work for future students.

4. PRESENTATION AND STYLE

- The basic compulsory format for the dissertation is as follows:

Cover sheet (with Generative AI Declaration)

Title page (title, date, your name and your supervisor's, BA Religion, [TCD Logo](#))

Table of contents, including page numbers, and chapters (each with a chapter title)

Bibliography or list of Works Cited

- Optional extras include: a dedication or acknowledgements (which would be inserted on a separate page before the table of contents)
- Appendices at the end (if, for instance, you are referring to field data, illustrations or other visual printed material)
- The dissertation should follow referencing conventions outlined in the School of English stylesheet and found here: <https://www.tcd.ie/media/tcd/english/pdfs/style-sheet-update-2018-19-1.pdf>
- The dissertation should be 1.5 or double-spaced and presented in a size 12 Sans Serif font such as Helvetica, Calibri, or Cambria.
- Submission is in electronic form via Blackboard (dissertation seminar).
- Information on how your dissertation will be uploaded as an electronic copy to Blackboard will follow nearer to the date of submission.

5. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Please refer to the information outlined in the BA Religion Handbook. Be aware that your Capstone Project demonstrates your skills and competence in managing a research project, also to future employers or when applying for further studies. Academic Integrity and responsible decisions about the use of new technologies are an essential part of the quality of your work.

Information about academic integrity at Trinity College Dublin can be located under the Academic Integrity Policy and procedures: <https://libguides.tcd.ie/academic-integrity>.

Plagiarism

Please refer to the information outlined in the BA Religion Handbook.

To ensure that you have a clear understanding of what plagiarism is, how Trinity deals with cases of plagiarism, and how to avoid it, you will find a repository of information on the Library website re [Plagiarism](#).

The Use and Referencing of Generative AI

Please refer to the information outlined in the BA Religion Handbook and the [College Statement on Artificial Intelligence and Generative AI in Teaching, Learning, Assessment & Research](#); and the [Library guidelines on acknowledging and referencing GenAI](#).

References/Sources:

[College Statement on Artificial Intelligence and Generative AI in Teaching, Learning, Assessment & Research](#)

[Library guidelines on acknowledging and reference GenAI](#).

6. CITATIONS AND BIBLIOGRAPHIC GUIDELINES

Capstones should follow **Chicago Referencing Style**. For more detailed instructions and examples on how to cite and create Bibliographies, please refer to the [Chicago Manual of Style Citation Quick Guide](#).

For TCD information on referencing, please access the [Library guides for Religion & Theology](#). Also, please discuss with your advisor on their expectations on referencing. Remember that the word count of 15,000 includes footnotes but excludes bibliography.

The Purdue OWL Writing Lab offers a range of supports on writing and Chicago Style: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/chicago_manual_17th_edition.

7. EXAMPLES OF PREVIOUS CAPSTONE PROJECTS

Examples of previous projects are made available in the Seminar. They may be consulted in the School by arranging time with your Undergraduate Officer at SRUndergrad@tcd.ie.