Union Theological College

Union Theological College
Teaching and Learning Policy and Procedures

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1. General Principles of Teaching and Learning

1.1. The following general principles of teaching and learning undergird our mission and vision.

We will provide high-quality and effective learning opportunities.	We will develop and enhance our curriculum through reflective practice.	We will offer learning opportunities that are interdisciplinary and relevant outside the classroom.
We will foster an inclusive learning community that supports students, enabling them to flourish.	We will work in engaged partnership with our students and other stakeholders.	We will widen access to learning opportunities.

2. Quality Assurance Requirements

2.1.Staff Recruitment

2.1.1. Central to our commitment to high-quality and effective learning opportunities is an aim to provide teaching that is research led and pedagogically informed.

2.1.2. Staff will be recruited through a rigorous process of selection that incorporates input from a range of stakeholders, representing both internal and external bodies. Relevant criteria for the consideration of potential teaching staff include the following: academic qualifications, contributions to scholarship, professional experience and qualifications, and ability to care for students.

2.1.3. The same emphasis on suitable qualifications and abilities extends also to the recruitment of visiting tutors, Library staff, administrative staff, and all who contribute to learning and teaching at UTC.

2.1.4. Applicants for academic posts will be provided with clear expectations regarding their roles and responsibilities.

2.1.5. Once recruited, staff will be formally inducted and given all information relevant to their employment, usually in the form of a College Handbook and Induction Programme.

2.1.6. Recruitment of College staff is the responsibility of the management committee, working on behalf of the Council for Training in Ministry.

2.2.Staff Development

2.2.1. In order to ensure that learning opportunities are undergirded by research and up-to-date pedagogy, teaching staff will be supported by the College and given opportunities for professional development, academic research, and reflection.[1]

2.2.2. Teaching staff are encouraged to gain appropriate professional recognition through achievement of Higher Education Academy status. All teaching staff will participate in annual peer review, in which colleagues review and give feedback on aspects of an individual's teaching practice. The purpose of peer review is to enhance the quality of teaching and improve the overall quality of the students' learning opportunities.

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2.3.Programme Design and Enhancement

2.3.1. UTC faculty are responsible for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its programmes.

2.3.2. All of our programmes are designed and reviewed according to a rigorous and transparent process of quality assurance in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, as outlined in the Programme and Module Design and Review.[2]

2.3.3. All programmes and modules leading to an award are subject to this annual review process. Regular evaluation will enhance our educational programmes by identifying areas of good practice and areas for improvement, and will enable us to respond accordingly. Programme and module review will take place annually, factoring in relevant information from student feedback (both formal and informal), student achievement and marks, tutor evaluation forms, and the input of external examiners and stakeholders.[3]

2.3.4. UTC is committed to the development of innovative programme design, including opportunities for distance learning. In order to ensure the equivalent high-quality learning experience to all of our students, regardless of location, online programmes are held to the same standard of excellence as our traditional programmes.

2.4. Module Design and Enhancement

2.4.1. Module design (including assessment, content, teaching methods, etc.) is the responsibility of the module coordinator, who is encouraged to seek creative and innovative methods of teaching and learning, as long as students are enabled to meet the programme-level and modular-level learning outcomes and that the assessment regime effectively measures students' achievement of those outcomes. The suitability and effectiveness of module design is reviewed

[1] **Internal Policy:** Sabbatical Leave Arrangements for Permanent Full Time Members of Academic Staff.
[2] Programme and Module Design and Review (Policies & Procedures | Union Theological College)
[3] Externality Policy for UTC Programmes (Policies & Procedures | Union Theological College)

and monitored in the first instance at the level of the department, and then at the level of the Faculty, primarily through the annual review process.[4]

2.5. Student Achievement and Assessment

2.5.1. UTC programmes are designed to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes. In order to ensure that desired programme-level and modular-level learning outcomes are achieved, UTC employs a wide range of forms of assessment, according to the principles outlined in our Assessment Policy and Procedures.[5] These policies and procedures aim to provide all students with an equal opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcomes.

2.5.2. The intended learning outcomes will be clearly defined, appropriate, aligned to the correct level descriptors of the FHEQ, and appropriately reflective of any relevant Subject Benchmark Statements.[6] As indicated in the assessment policy, all assessment tasks will be aligned not only with module-level learning outcomes but also with programme-level learning outcomes.

2.5.3. In order to ensure that all students are made aware of their progress towards their intended learning outcomes, tutors will use both formative assessment (assessment for learning) and summative assessment (assessment of learning) in their modules. The suitability and effectiveness of assessment tasks will be reviewed regularly through the annual review process.[7]

2.6.Reasonable Adjustments

2.6.1. The College will make reasonable adjustments to assessment in order to support students with a disability or other ongoing medical or mental health condition. The aim of reasonable adjustment is to ensure that all students are able to demonstrate the full extent of their academic abilities, irrespective of a disability or long-term condition.[8]

2.6.2. The College's Disability Policy and Extenuating Circumstances Policy can be found on the College website[9] .

2.7.Employability

2.7.1. As a College, we understand our responsibility to prepare students for the wider world. To that end we recognise the importance of embedding employability and transferable skills into the curricula. UTC programmes will help equip students for their future careers through the development of transferable skills, including critical thinking, interpersonal skills, and digital literacy.

[4] Programme and Module Design and Review (Policies & Procedures | Union Theological College)
[5] UTC Assessment Policy (Policies & Procedures | Union Theological College)
[6] Subject Benchmark Statement: Theology and Religious Studies
[7] Programme and Module Design and Review (Policies & Procedures | Union Theological College)
[8] UTC Assessment Policy (Policies & Procedures | Union Theological College)
[9] Student Disability Policy and Procedures; Extenuating Circumstances for PTFI Students UTC Assessment Policy; Extenuating Circumstances Procedures for Undergraduate Students (Policies & Procedures | Union Theological College)

2.7.2. The issue of student employability is addressed in the first instance by each department in the annual review process, in which departments are required to identify their specific contributions to employability skills needed by students.[10]

2.8. Widening Access

2.8.1. As a small specialist College, partnerships with other educational institutions or organisations can bring the benefits of broadening horizons and enriching student and staff experience. The College partners with the Alexandrian Institute [11]; the Kirby Laing Centre[12]; and the Davenant Institute[13]. The College will ensure that all partnership arrangements meet the expectations, practices and guiding principles of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education Partnerships, alongside its own Partnership Principles and Procedures. [14]

2.8.2. In order to remove as many barriers to success as possible, students are admitted to UTC according to its principles of fair admission.[15]

2.8.3. UTC programmes will be developed with diversity in mind. Module coordinators are therefore encouraged to design learning opportunities that are inclusive and mindful of the needs of all students. Alternative assessment arrangements will be made for students with exceptional circumstances and special learning requirements. The College, through its Admissions Panel, is responsible for the recruitment, selection, and admission of its students. Admission to UTC is on the basis of academic qualification but the College is committed to encouraging application from students using non-standard but appropriate entry routes, such as recognition of prior learning.[16]

2.9. Student Induction

2.9.1. The student induction process will provide students with a clear understanding of their academic and social environment, the primary skills required for their programme, and relevant information about sources of academic and personal advice and support.

2.9.2. The Gamble Library will host orientation for new users and will provide students with information about academic best practice, research methods, and the PTFI style guide.[17]

2.9.3. Induction normally takes place the week before Week 1 in September. International and online students will be inducted in a manner comparable to residential students.

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[10] **Internal Document:** Annual Departmental Review – Summary available in the Annual Report for the corresponding academic year.

[11] The Alexandrian Institute | Christ's Word for True Wisdom

[12] The Kirby Laing Centre - Home - Christian Scholarship & Public Theology

[13] Renewing Christian Wisdom for the Church | The Davenant Institute

[14] Partnership Principles and Procedures (Policies & Procedures | Union Theological College)

[15] PTFI Admissions Policy; UG Admissions Policy (Policies & Procedures | Union Theological College)

[16] Recognition of Prior Learning Policy (Policies & Procedures | Union Theological College)

[17] UTC Style Guide (Policies & Procedures | Union Theological College)

2.10. Supportive and Inclusive Learning Community

2.10.1. UTC recognises that today's students are individuals that come from a wide variety of backgrounds and bring with them a distinctive mix of strengths, weaknesses, learning styles, and aspirations. Our aim is to support each of these students as best we can, regardless of where they come from, from induction to graduation. As a relatively small College with a friendly atmosphere, student support and guidance can be tailored to individual students.

2.10.2. Staff commit to promote the Christian ethos of UTC, to provide students with accurate and up-to-date information about their programme, and to care for the general welfare of students.

2.10.3. Student learning will be supported through the provision of information about good academic practice, research skills, and the avoidance of plagiarism.[18]

2.10.4. Students are introduced to academic plagiarism detection software at induction and all students' work is submitted through this on the virtual learning environment.

2.11. Personal Tutoring

2.11.1. Central to our goal of fostering a learning community that supports our students is the Personal Tutor scheme.[19]

2.11.2. Personal tutors will be responsible for monitoring student progress, providing information and support, soliciting feedback, and offering opportunities for reflection. Personal tutors will make regular contact with their student tutees to ensure that each student is supported throughout their study at UTC.

2.11.3. Through the Personal Tutor scheme, students will be enabled to assess their own academic progress and will be encouraged to become life-long learners by the provision of frequent constructive feedback and regular occasions for self-reflection. This scheme of regular contact with a Tutor will enable students to consider their personal goals, skills, and progression.

2.11.4. UTC is committed to providing all students with a safe environment, seeking the flourishing of all its students, and reacting appropriately to any indications that they might be at risk.

2.12. Programme and Module Information

2.12.1. Module coordinators will ensure that students are provided with accurate information about their modules (usually in the form of module descriptors), including pertinent information regarding assessment, intended learning outcomes, learning opportunities, and relevant College policies and procedures.

2.12.2. Module coordinators will ensure that students are given the marking criteria for specific assessment tasks at the beginning of the term.

2.12.3. Faculty will provide relevant and timely information about student pathways, often through a module fair, which informs students about module choices and allows face-to-face engagement with module coordinators.

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[18] Academic Integrity Policy; PG Academic Integrity Procedures; Academic Intergrity Policy and Procedures (Undergraduate) (Policies & Procedures | Union Theological College)

[19] **Internal Document:** Personal Tutor Handbooks

2.12.4. Normally, module coordinators will provide access to such module and programme information through the VLE.

2.12.5. It is possible that a module listed on the website will not be able to run due to reasons beyond our control. It is also possible the module availability will be limited by maximum class sizes. Students will be contacted in advance if their module choices are affected by any of these issues.

2.13. Learning Environments

2.13.1. The College understands "learning environments" to include not just the physical facility but also virtual facilities, the learning resources, the social atmosphere, and off-campus learning opportunities (including work-based learning opportunities). UTC will ensure that these learning environments are safe, accessible, and reliable for all students.

2.13.2. Faculty will ensure that reasonable investments are made toward the Library services, in line with the Library's Collection Development Policy.[20]

2.13.3. The suitability of learning environments is considered in the annual review process.[21]

2.14. Engaged Partnership with Students and other Stakeholders

2.14.1. Effective teaching and learning takes place in the context of productive dialogue between tutors, students, and relevant stakeholders. UTC commits to creating and sustaining such a context of engagement by involving students and other stakeholders as much as possible in the review and development of learning opportunities.

2.14.2. UTC treats its students as adult participants in the pursuit of learning. The College therefore expects all students to familiarise themselves with all relevant module documents, regulations, and requirements and to provide reflective feedback on their experiences.

2.14.3. Tutors will make enhancements to learning and teaching by engaging with students in effective dialogue about their learning, and by helping students understand their responsibility to participate actively in the learning process.

2.14.4. We will ensure that all students have regular opportunities to make their views on their learning experience known to the College through systems of representation and student feedback at module, programme, and College levels.

2.14.5. Staff will listen to student feedback and respond accordingly, as specified in the annual review process (see "Programme design and review" above).

2.15. Faculty and Student Charter

2.15.1. Faculty and students will agree to a charter which reflects a shared commitment to uphold a Christian ethos at Union Theological College.

[20] Library Collection Management Policy (Policies & Procedures | Union Theological College)

[21] Programme and Module Design and Review (Policies & Procedures | Union Theological College)

3. Reference Points

i. Quality Assurance Processes for Programme Design and Module/Programme Review[22]
ii. Union Theological College Assessment Policy [23]
iii. Subject benchmark statement: Theology and religious studies[24]
iv. The UK Quality Code for Higher Education[25]

[22] Programme and Module Design and Review (Policies & Procedures | Union Theological College)
[23] UTC Assessment Policy (Policies & Procedures | Union Theological College)
[24] Subject Benchmark Statement: Theology and Religious Studies
[25] UK Quality Code for Higher Education 2024