



Union
Theological
College

Programme Specification

Master of Divinity

Awarding Body	Presbyterian Theological Faculty Ireland (PTFI)
Teaching Body	Union Theological College, 108 Botanic Avenue, Belfast BT7 1JT
Type of Collab. Arrangement	N/A
Award Title	Master of Divinity (MDiv)
Final Award	MDiv
Exit Award(s)	PG Dip Min 120 CATS or PGCert Min 60 CATS
Department	Department of Theology
Language of Study	English
FHEQ Level	Level 7
JACS Code	V610
QAA Subject Benchmark	QAA Benchmark Theology and Religious Studies (2022)
Normal Completion Time & Max Duration of Study	Part-time study – within three years of first registration.
Mode of Study	Part-time
Mode of Delivery	In-person
Date Approved and Name of Authorised Body	PTFI 2018
Applies to Students Commencing Study in (month/year)	September 2026



Summary of the Programme

The MDiv is a professional Master's degree aimed at enabling graduates to qualify for entry into ordained Christian ministry.

Aims of the Programme

Main Educational Aims

- To enable students to build upon the competencies and skills of relevant previous study and experience through a programme focused on the advanced study of the disciplines normally required for Christian ministry;
- to provide opportunity for students to reflect upon and integrate their relevant prior learning and experience with new learning which is informed by research-led and research-focused scholarship;
- to provide a rounded flexible programme which is informed by research-led and research-focused scholarship;
- to strengthen and develop students' intellectual and practical skills so that they would be more effective in Christian ministry;
- to provide the knowledge and skills necessary to produce original research through sustained reflection on and engagement with an appropriate topic; and
- to develop an appreciation of the vocation of the Christian ministry and the skills necessary for such a ministry, particularly the ability to:
 - deal with complex theological and pastoral issues both systematically and creatively, making sound judgments, and communicating conclusions clearly;
 - act autonomously in the planning and implementing of tasks at a professional or equivalent level; and
 - engage in lifelong ministerial development.

Criteria for Admission

Programme Entrance Requirements

Typically, at least a 2.2 degree, or equivalent qualification. Further, as the Degree Characteristics Statement notes programmes 'in this category often attract entrants with a bachelor's degree with honours or equivalent, or experience that may or may not be directly relevant to the particular profession.'¹

For overseas students, a 2.1 honours degree is normally equivalent to a Cumulative Grade Point Average of 3.3 or higher from an accredited institution.

Union Theological College requires all applicants whose first language is not English to have one of the following qualifications as evidence of their English language ability:

- An undergraduate or master's degree that was taught and assessed in English in a majority English-speaking country as defined by UK Visas and Immigration.

¹ See The [QAA Characteristics Statement: Master's Degree \(2015\)](#), 5.



- International English Language Testing System (IELTS) Academic module (not General Training): overall score of 7.0 with at least 6.0 in each category.
- Pearson Test of English, Academic: PTE(A) total 67 (at least 56 in each of the 'communicative skills' sections).
- Cambridge Proficiency (CPE) or Cambridge Advanced (CAE): total 185 (at least 169 in each module).
- TOEFL iBT: 100 overall with a minimum of 20 in each of the skills.
- Degrees taught and assessed in English must be no more than three years old at the beginning of the MA programme. Language tests must be no more than two years old at the beginning of the degree programme.

Credit Accumulation & Transfer, and Accreditation of Prior Learning

The College's RPL Policy allows prospective students who do not meet the criteria for admission to demonstrate relevant prior experiential and certificated learning through the production of a portfolio of learning.

Programme Outcomes

The programme provides opportunities for students to achieve and demonstrate the following learning and educational outcomes.

Knowledge and Understanding

By completion of this MDiv programme, a successful student should have demonstrated:

1. An advanced understanding of the Biblical texts and the knowledge to interpret them competently;
2. An advanced and systematic understanding of hermeneutical methodologies and their relevance to the interpretation of Biblical texts.
3. An advanced understanding of the methodological and hermeneutical models and assumptions used in the application of Biblical texts to contemporary ministry contexts.
4. An advanced and thorough understanding of the diverse contributions of those texts to biblical theology, systematic theology, historical theology, and pastoral ministry.
5. An advanced and systematic understanding of a variety of key doctrines with reference to the following:
 - (i) Biblical texts;
 - (ii) major theologians and their writings (both historical and contemporary);
 - (iii) different theological methodologies; and
 - (iv) the contemporary church.



6. An advanced and systematic understanding of selected periods of church history and historical theology and a thorough understanding of the methodological and historiographical models and assumptions used in assessing the significance history for the contemporary church.
7. An advanced understanding of how the Christian faith engages with various contemporary ethical and pastoral issues, and a thorough understanding of relevant methodologies

Skills

By completion of this MDiv programme, a successful student should have demonstrated:

1. The ability/capacity to interpret a wide range of Biblical texts, at an advanced level, applying appropriate scholarly resources and critical tools from across the methodological spectrum (author-, text-, and reader-centred), with regard to the history of their reception and study, and their theological and pastoral consequences in contemporary ministry contexts, whilst assessing those theories and views and, where appropriate, proposing alternatives.
2. The skills to read relevant primary and secondary texts in a way which: is careful and accurate; discerns and draws out theological and philosophical assumptions; and assesses their consequences and contribution to Biblical interpretation and theology, Christian doctrine, Church history, and pastoral ministry.
3. The ability to adopt a critical distance from source material (both primary sources and secondary literature from contemporary scholarship) and to evaluate it at an advanced level.
4. The ability to analyse complex issues involving Christian doctrine and construct well framed and apt responses which: integrate Biblical exegesis; sensitively apply sophisticated ideas; and are cognisant of the personal and pastoral implications of theological ideas.
5. The skills to research, analyse and deploy varied and problematic historical sources, dealing systematically and creatively with complex issues and making sound judgements, sometimes in the absence of complete data.
6. The ability to articulate sophisticated, cogent and creative responses to typical issues arising in Christian theology and pastoral ministry, communicating these responses (in both written and oral form) clearly and appropriately to specialist and non-specialist audiences, demonstrating an ability to reflect critically upon their own standpoint, and with awareness of how chosen methodologies shape outcomes.
7. The ability to engage in informed, respectful dialogue with other points of view in such a way as to recognise the strengths and weakness of those various different perspectives and traditions.
8. The competency in postgraduate research skills to access current research and make original applications of knowledge (not necessarily the creation of new knowledge).



Programme Structure and Module Requirements

A student will take a total of 180 CATS of modules as outlined below:

2026–2027:	Theology for Ministry (Autumn) Biblical Theology (Autumn) The Great Tradition (Spring)
2027–2028:	New Testament Pauline Theology (Autumn) Old Testament Prophetic Texts (Spring)
2028–2029:	Reformation History (Autumn) Christian Cultural Engagement (Autumn) Irish Church History (Spring) Synoptic Gospels & Acts (Spring) Dissertation (Autumn or Spring)

Vocational Opportunities

Employability

- The course is particularly tailored for students training for the ordained ministry, especially that of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI).
- It is also designed to prepare students for postgraduate study at Master's level.
- The transferrable skills developed are all highly sought after by a diverse range of employers.

Programme Awards

This programme conforms to the Union Theological College PGT Regulations.

Programme Teaching and Learning Strategies

The programme teaching and learning strategy aligns with the College's teaching and learning strategy 2025–30. It has been designed to enable students to fulfil the learning outcomes outlined above.

Knowledge and Understanding

In co-ordination with their tutor, students will gain knowledge and understanding as follows:

- Students undertake a course of study that is designed to provide breadth and depth in their understanding of the five disciplines.
- Lectures are interspersed with guided readings which highlight areas of ongoing debate and model the knowledge and skills described in the learning outcomes. Students receive feedback (both formal and informal) to aid in the development of the knowledge and skills (particularly communication skills required to advance sophisticated arguments) described in the learning outcomes.
- Training in research methods is incorporated into all the taught modules



Skills

In coordination with their tutor, students develop skills through the following:

- Student-centred learning situations involving texts (primary or secondary) develop the ability to present, summarise, evaluate and debate the results of the critical analysis of texts and contexts among peers. Often students are required to prepare, in advance of class, set texts.
- Feedback to students (both formal and informal) designed to improve the following skills: critical analysis; hermeneutics; and the charitable presentation and assessment of other assumptions, approaches and interpretations.
- Student-centred learning situations involving verbal presentations (both formal and informal) which develop the ability to present, summarise, evaluate and analyse texts, doctrines and contexts and their application to the church and contemporary culture.

Programme Assessment Strategy

The College's Assessment Policy includes principles which are fully aligned with the UK Quality Code. Assessment methods on the programme enable the student to demonstrate that they have achieved the learning outcomes outlined above. A wide variety of methods are used to enable the student to have every opportunity to demonstrate their competence.

Knowledge and Understanding

Student knowledge and understanding are assessed by a combination of these assessment elements:

- Class tests (both formative and summative) allow students to demonstrate the value and utility of incremental learning.
- Seminars provide excellent formative feedback as students interact with subject experts and peers in the analysis of subjects, themes and ideas.
- Journaling encourages sustained reflective and evaluative practice.
- Individual presentations allow students to demonstrate the presentation of fluent and cogent arguments in written and oral form.
- Essays and other written assignments allow students to demonstrate:
 - the ability to engage with stipulated reading;
 - the initiative to engage in a wider exploration of the subject; and
 - many of the other intended learning outcomes of the programme.
- Timed written examinations and class tests are designed to enable the student to demonstrate:
 - a degree of mastery of the subject, cumulatively acquired;
 - the fruit of independent learning and research;
 - time-limited exposition of analysis of specific subjects;
 - swift structuring in the presentation of ideas; and
 - distillation of essentials and exclusion of information of marginal importance.



Skills

- Written assignment questions are formulated in such a way as to increase the depth of the learning experience, thus assisting in the development of abstract critical thinking, independent thought, exegetical skills, hermeneutical sophistication, and the application and evaluation of theory to complex and unpredictable pastoral situations.
- Group presentations encourage students to collaborate with peers and negotiate the demands of teamwork.
- The dissertation/research project enables the student to demonstrate:
 - the results of independent research on a specialised topic;
 - an ability for critical evaluation of scholarly views;
 - an appropriate measure of insight and originality;
 - appropriate presentational, bibliographical and discipline-specific skills; and
 - many of the other intended learning outcomes of the programme.

Student Support and Guidance

Each student is allocated a Personal Tutor who can assist with academic advice and support with personal issues. The College has a Disability Officer who supports and advises students with a disability, specific learning difficulty (such as dyslexia) or a long-term medical condition.