



Union  
Theological  
College

# Annual Report & Enhancement Plan

September 2022



# Contents

Introduction	03
Students	04
Staff	12
College and Church	14
The Gamble Library	16
Pursuing Union’s Mission	18
Quality Assurance	24
Conclusion	26
Appendix 1	28
Appendix 2	32



# Introduction

As a denominational College of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Union Theological College continues to have a core commitment, on behalf of the General Assembly, to the training of ministers and deaconesses for service to the Church.

Accordingly, the experience and achievements of the College’s denominational students who are on ministerial pathways will be a prominent feature in this report. For on-campus ministerial students, but also for a growing community of online learners, Union as an alternative provider offers master’s awards in Theology that the College’s

external examiners confirm to be comparable in rigour to the best available within the UK higher education sector: more detail will be provided below. Few undergraduate students remained, in 2021-22, under collaborative arrangements with Queen’s University, Belfast (QUB), and almost all have now completed their studies in Theology and graduated; meanwhile, at time of writing the College is in a position to welcome its first cohort of new undergraduate students for the Bachelor of Arts (BA Hons) in Theology: in what follows, more will be said about this transition in the College’s offer to school-leavers.

# Students

Students remain front and centre in the ministry and mission of Union College and total student numbers for the academic year 2021-22 rose by around 10% in comparison to last year. In spite of the graduation of the final full-time cohort of QUB undergraduate students in summer 2021, leaving only a small number of part-time students to complete their studies, parallel recruitment across the College's postgraduate pathways has more than compensated. One new postgraduate award, inaugurated this academic year, became part of the mix: the Master of Theology in Old Testament.

The detailed composition of the student body in 2021-22 is as indicated in the following table, with further narrative detail supplied on the following page.

Programme of Study	Students Enrolled	Retention Rate (%)
<b>On-Campus Pathways</b>		
CTM Non-award ministry courses	6	100
CTM Transferring	2	100
CTM Diaconal Studies	2	100
PTFI Master of Divinity	23	100
QUB Bachelor of Divinity	3	100
QUB Bachelor of Theology	1	100
QUB BA Theology with Philosophy	1	Transferred
QUB BA Theology	1	100
QUB Doctor of Philosophy	3	100
Erasmus exchange	1	N/a
<b>Total On-Campus</b>	<b>43</b>	
<b>Online / Non-residency Pathways</b>		
PTFI Master of Theology: Reformed Theology	20	95
PTFI Master of Theology: New Testament	3	100
PTFI Master of Theology: Old Testament	2	100
PTFI Master of Arts in Theology	30	86
PTFI Doctor of Philosophy	7	100
PTFI Postgrad Certificate in Biblical Greek	5	100
<b>Total Online</b>	<b>67</b>	
<b>Total All Pathways</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>95 (overall)</b>





## Ministerial Students

This academic year, the combined cohort of ministerial students comprised thirty-two students who took a variety of courses in the acquisition of ministerial competencies, as required by the Church's Council for Training in Ministry (CTM). Of these, twenty-six also studied concurrently for a master's award: twenty-three on the Master of Divinity pathway; and three on specialist master's programmes, with two on the Master of Theology in Reformed Theology pathway and one on the Master of Theology in New Testament pathway. Final-year ministerial students unable to complete a summer placement earlier in their studies, owing to the health emergency, completed this element in summer 2022 as the final requirement prior to licensing as probationary ministers by their home Presbytery in autumn 2022.

Two graduations were held by Presbyterian Theological Faculty, Ireland (PTFI) in the course of the academic year. The first, on 29th October 2021 in Assembly Buildings, related to the previous academic year (2020-21): some of the awards made had been deferred owing to the covid-19 pandemic. Postgraduate awards were made to seventeen graduands in all, from five pathways: the Master of Theology in Reformed Theology (three students); and the Master of Theology in New Testament (three students)

and the Postgraduate Certificate in Biblical Greek (two students), where the students in question were the first graduates from these recently-created programmes. The Graduate Diploma in Ministry: Diaconal Studies was also awarded (three students), as was the Postgraduate Diploma in Ministry (eight students); for both awards, now discontinued, this was their final graduating cohort. The PTFI Graduate Certificate in Youth Ministry, taken alongside their bachelor's pathway by QUB undergraduate students, was also awarded for the final time (eleven students).

The second graduation ceremony took place on 10th June 2022, in College, and related to the 2021-22 academic year. One student received a Master of Theology (MTh) in Reformed Theology award while five students received their Master of Divinity (MDiv) award. In addition to any awards, thirteen students also received CTM certificates of completion relating to their ministerial studies – certificates that enable the students to be licensed, in due course, as probationers for the Presbyterian ministry. In a number of related respects, completion of studies by this group of students constituted an important milestone.

Firstly, these on-campus ministerial students were in the unique position of having undertaken the bulk of their training remotely, owing to the covid-19 pandemic, with online interactions largely substituting for the customary in-person settings in classroom, library, common room or chapel. As "Plan B" took shape across all courses and requirements, great flexibility was demanded

of both students and staff – as detailed by last year's report. While the College's provision for its online students meant that these ministerial students were well resourced for their academic work, in many respects the full campus experience was hard to approximate on screen. Nonetheless, the students were appreciative of all of the College's efforts to address the challenges and compensate for any deficit, while the College through its Principal could acknowledge, at their graduation, the extraordinary resilience they had learnt and commitment they had shown.

Secondly, this was the inaugural cohort of ministerial students to complete studies in the period following the end of collaborative arrangements with QUB for provision of ministerial training alongside a University award in Theology. At point of entry in autumn 2019, and for students with a suitable undergraduate degree, the College began delivering a new MDiv programme, leading to a PTFI award. For the Church, these students' graduation with an MDiv is good news as it enables them to bring enhanced skills and knowledge in core areas of biblical and theological work to bear as they engage in the practice of ministry in congregations and presbyteries across the denomination.

Thirdly, graduation of a first cohort, following completion of the concluding dissertation on a topic chosen by the student, offered an opportunity for the College to review the full programme for the first time since its introduction in 2019, in addition to incremental and interim reviews.

Graduating students were invited to contribute to this review by giving the programme co-ordinator bespoke exit feedback on their experience. Since the MDiv is an element integral to ministerial training for most students – with all MDiv modules in Biblical Studies or in Theology dovetailing with core CTM ministerial competencies – its evaluation at this juncture is especially important. The review hails the programme as a success and also suggests some important enhancements, the implementation which is envisaged for the 2023-24 academic year.

## QUB Undergraduate Students



As reported last year, again in 2021-22 the College continued its commitment to remaining Theology students – whether undergraduate or postgraduate – by offering them the best experience possible in their teaching or supervision arrangements. In late June 2022, the College Principal attended a celebratory graduation event for students, including those from Theology, previously unable to graduate publicly because of the covid-19 pandemic. Then at QUB's summer graduation in early July, also attended by the College Principal, University awards were conferred upon four remaining part-time undergraduate Theology students – now under the care of another one of the University's Schools – who completed their studies this academic year and duly graduated. One further QUB Theology student had transferred to another degree pathway during the course of the academic year.

### Degrees were awarded to the graduating students as follows:

#### Bachelor of Arts in Theology

One student achieved a Second-Class Honours, First Division.

#### Bachelor of Divinity

Two students achieved a First-Class Honours. One student achieved a Second-Class Honours, First Division.

There now remains one further part-time QUB student who expects to complete studies and graduate next academic year, again under the care of one of the University's Schools.

#### QUB Doctor of Philosophy

In 2021-22, three postgraduate research students completed their respective projects, all in the area of biblical studies, and were awarded their PhD at either the winter 2021 or summer 2022 graduations. One of them, is resident in N. Ireland and the College is able to benefit from their contribution to its teaching. One part-time postgraduate research student now remains.

In the concluding phase of collaboration with QUB, the College has continued to work with the University's appointed external examiner(s) and is grateful for reports that salute the maintenance of excellence, in teaching and learning, in the College's teach-out of the various Theology

programmes and in its commitment to remaining students through tailored tutorial support.

#### PTFI Postgraduate Taught students

As evidenced by the data at the beginning of the report, the progressive roll-out since 2019 of quality postgraduate taught programmes has met with a pleasing measure of success. Three programmes have attracted considerable numbers, while the intake for others has been small. All have welcomed gifted and committed students – and retention rates have been high. Like their on-campus peers taking ministerial courses, online students taken seriously the opportunity to make the student voice heard in College processes that help shape their education. In the next phase of development, it will be important to find ways of improving and increasing recruitment, marketing and promotion of these programmes.

Using its internal human resources, the College initially pioneered the Master of Arts in Theology, progressively adapting this through partnership with the BibleMesh Institute and the appointment of suitably-qualified recognised teachers. Enrolled students naturally fell into distinct cohorts, one within and one outside the UK, and it was important to ensure that the student experience and learning opportunities were of equal standard for both. Having assured itself that this is indeed the case, and after already integrating the two cohorts into one, Faculty feels the time is now right to devolve delivery of this programme to BibleMesh, under a validation agreement. This arrangement means that the College will continue



to be responsible for the appointment of all recognised teachers involved in the programme as well as for quality assurance generally, including monitoring of the programme itself.

#### PTFI Doctor of Philosophy

Postgraduate research students must undertake a trial period in preparation for differentiation – a stage when, in line with the College policy, an independent panel appointed by Faculty reviews each beginning research student's early progress and output. Written work is reviewed, an oral interview conducted and the likelihood of a successful outcome considered – leading to a recommendation as to whether or not a student may proceed. Those who have so far undergone differentiation have successfully become full PhD students. Faculty has been impressed by the students' high calibre as well as by the excellence of their research projects.

As noted above, while residency is not required of those admitted to the doctoral programme, three of the seven students are in fact resident in N. Ireland and are thus able to contribute both to on-campus teaching and to research activity within whichever College Department, Biblical Studies or Theology, is responsible for their supervision. Thus in 2021-22, for instance, as part of their professional development two research students in Theology convened and chaired a programme of six research seminars on topics relating to systematic theology or Church history.

In order to grow the doctoral programme, the College needs students with solid credentials and with potential and also supervisors with appropriate expertise and time to guide and accompany their projects. With both needs in mind, and with a view to developing the programme through collaborative provision and to boosting the College's supervisory capacity, new partnerships have begun with the Kirby Laing Centre, Cambridge, and with Crosslands.

#### BA (Hons) in Theology

Next year's Annual Report will reflect on the launch and first year of the new Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Theology to be delivered by the College and validated by St. Mary's University, Twickenham – with the first students at level 4 beginning their studies in September 2022. However, last year's report already set out Graduate Attributes (again reproduced in Appendix 2 below). This Graduate Attributes Framework identifies important values and virtues that the College hopes to see its undergraduate students acquire and demonstrate, with both their future employability and their positive and active contribution to society in mind. It is in any case characteristic of the study of Theology or Religious Studies that students be encouraged to share actively in their own personal and professional development and bring self-knowledge and self-care to their studies.



# Staff

As reported last year, College Faculty's human resources were replenished just prior to the start of the academic year with the arrival of three new colleagues appointed to roles in Ministry, Practical Theology and New Testament respectively.



In December 2021, they were joined by Dr Stephen Moore as Lecturer in Old Testament: Stephen comes to Union in Belfast from Union School of Theology in Wales and brings particular expertise in Hebrew and other Semitic languages. In autumn 2021, Ms Alice Eustace – a graduate of the College – took up a post as Senior Secretary in the College Administration. In April 2022, Mrs Dale Wright retired following twenty-six years of varied and valuable service to Union College in administrative and support roles. In May 2022, Ms Emma Boyd joined the team as College Receptionist and has settled in well.

At time of writing, Mrs Karen Henderson has just completed a short but very significant term as the College's Head of Academic Administration, a role to which she brought her many years of experience in quality assurance in the University sector of higher education. During Karen's tenure, Union College has become firmly established on a footing whereby quality lies at the core of all aspects of the College's life and work. Karen has ensured that all aspects of quality are underpinned by policies and procedures that reflect higher education generally but are specifically calibrated to serve a small, independent provider like Union.

Karen's legacy is also that the whole administrative team, together with Faculty, understand how quality is everyone's responsibility and is worked out in procedures, tasks and actions that enable habituation in delivering it. Union is grateful to Karen for a key job well done and an enduring contribution, and, as Karen enters retirement, the whole College community wishes her well.

In their respective 2021-22 reports to Faculty, both the Biblical Studies Dept. and the Theology Dept. recognise that additional human resource will be needed if they are to deliver on all of their present or prospective commitments. Faculty is committed, through its Teaching and Learning Strategy, to providing research-led teaching and this, in turn, necessitates that both full-time and adjunct Faculty be research-active and devote quality time to this endeavour. Twice, during the academic year, Faculty set aside time for colleagues to present cameos of their own research interests or output and to enjoy conversation and receive feedback: for a newly reconstituted Faculty, this collective theological thinking also provided valuable opportunities for team-building.



# College and Church

Under the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's Council for Training in Ministry, the College Management Committee oversees all aspects of the College's work, engaging closely with Faculty and with the College Administration in support of the College's ministry and mission.



In 2021-22, the Management Committee's Teaching and Learning Panel pursued its support of the work of Faculty in delivering all aspects of the curriculum for both ministerial students and those on other study pathways. The Panel's role included for instance: scrutiny of all reported Faculty business; approval of all courses in competencies for ministerial students delivered by Faculty; consideration of the Principal's Annual Report; regular perusal of progress with the enhancement plan for implementing the five-year Teaching and Learning Strategy; granting of sabbatical leave for a member of Faculty; and monitoring of the internal and external quality assurance processes leading to the visit and report of the Quality Assurance Agency in May-June 2022. The Panels officers also contributed to a consultation as part of Faculty's review of the Master of Divinity programme, to coincide with the

graduation of the first cohort of ministerial students to achieve this award, introduced in 2019.

In tandem with College staff or with the denomination's Finance office, Management Committee's Finance, Property and Administration Panel oversees all aspects of the College budget. In 2021-22, it continued to bring its collective expertise to bear in a range of practical areas. Maintenance of the College as an historic building remains central to its work and significant capital projects undertaken in 2021-22 included overhaul and replacement of elements of the heating system, while installation of a new integrated College access system will shortly be finished. These improvements follow upon earlier repairs to the College's stonework and, in 2020-21, important structural repairs were undertaken to the Gamble Library and to some parts of the roof.



# The Gamble Library

Within the College's own mission and ethos, the particular remit of the Gamble Library is that of equipping Faculty, students and other members and users with the hard copy and digital resources needed for purposes of teaching and learning or research, helping with various skills relating to information literacy and generally promoting personal or professional development. Together the College Librarian, Ms Joy Conkey, and her Assistant Mrs Margaret Ollivier, work tirelessly to offer this service to all users.

The start of this academic year saw a progressive return to normal frequentation of the Library, fully open from October 2021 onwards following many months of physical closure for a variety of reasons. Together with various necessary repairs or the resumption of full functions, a Disaster Plan for the Library is now in place, with a range of disaster recovery measures aligned to it: in light of the value and importance of the Library's special collections, this particular provision is very welcome.

During and after the times of restricted access, the Library has been engaged in ongoing strategic acquisition of e-resources and provision of supplementary online resources through the Digital Content Store or databases such as Early English Books Online, as well as in enhancing the shelves in hard copy resources across the various domains of Theology and of the Library's collections. Whilst total numbers of students (and thus of library issues) remain significantly below the levels of just a few years ago, and budgetary constraints remain a limiting factor, the increasing availability of e-resources and access to e-journals or the expanding statistics for their use, by both online and on-campus students, suggest that the Library is keeping pace with the evolution of the College's student body.

Particularly since the start of 2022 the Librarian, Ms Joy Conkey, has been especially active in

curating a series of digital exhibitions on the history of the English, Irish and Scots or Ulster-Scots Bibles, for all of which the Library has significant holdings featured in the online material. These exhibitions built on the first online exhibition associated with the N. Ireland Centenary and with the College's hosting of the N. Ireland Parliament from 1921 to 1932, which attracted significant public interest. In tandem with to the digital series, a physical Exhibition is in preparation with an opportunity to display Bibles and related material from the Library's special collections. This Exhibition will be open to visitors for most of the autumn. Whether digital or physical, such curation of the rich resources of the Gamble Library offers the College community and other Library users, the Church and the general public access to a rich vein of Bibles and interpretative material. These efforts are also in anticipation of an international Conference on the work and legacy of Martin Luther as a Bible translator, illustrator and publisher which the College will host in September 2022, coinciding with the inauguration of the Exhibition.

The Gamble Library was established in April 1873, which means that its sesquicentennial will arise in the course of next academic year. That anniversary will give further opportunity to showcase the Library's resources and to celebrate its mission to the College, the Church and the wider community.

# Pursuing Union's Mission

In 2020-21, the Annual Report devoted significant space to Union College's mission in general and to the 2020 – 2025 Teaching and Learning Strategy in particular. The Report drew attention, in detail, to the General Principles of Learning and Teaching enshrined in the Strategy, connecting these to a set of interim goals and outcomes including some specific targets for the 2021-22 academic year. The College's Mission Statement and Vision, which inspire and inform all strategy, were also set out and explained, while the Graduate Attributes associated with the prospective new undergraduate programme were articulated.

Find all achieved outcomes in the  
Appendix of this report.

Although these elements need not be spelt out in detail again this year, they remain the backdrop against which to interpret what has been achieved in the past academic year and the

framework for what is anticipated in 2022-23. Accordingly, brief mention will be made of instances of progress towards their realisation in each case.

## Our Mission Statement

Union Theological College welcomes students from all backgrounds to study Christian Theology in a community of faith and research-led scholarship to prepare them for life, work and service in both local and global contexts.

In addition to the ministerial students, online students and remaining University students reported on above, and as already indicated, at time of writing the College is once more preparing

to receive new undergraduate students and to incorporate them quickly and effectively into the wider student body. They will be Union students but their degree will be awarded by St. Mary's University, Twickenham. Their arrival offers the College the happy prospect of increasing the diversity of the current student body by engaging, once more, with young people at the point when they move from secondary to higher education. For the students themselves, coming to Union to study Theology provides an opportunity to receive an education, enjoy an experience and undergo significant personal development in preparation for working life that generations of previous school-leavers have enjoyed at Union College.



## Our Vision

- 1 Equip all our students with a theological literacy that will enable them to flourish as individuals, and contribute positively to society and culture.
- 2 Train effective ministers to lead Christ's church in fulfilling its calling in the world.
- 3 Resource all in the Church by providing a hub for learning and research.

## Teaching and Learning Strategy 2020 - 2025

It is appropriate, at this stage, briefly to address the third bullet-point. As reported last year, a Professor of Ministry and Director of the Institute for Ministry was recruited and joined Faculty. Many aspects come together in this new and crucial role, particularly on the interface with prospective, current and former ministerial students and the various agencies of the Church associated with their growth and development or tasked with directing or enabling it – and much of the Director's first year has entailed interacting with them all. This networking, establishment of relationships and laying of groundwork for collaboration will help shape the Institute for Ministry and calibrate ways that the work of the College can serve the Church, through the Institute as a hub.

When the Strategy was devised, a set of short-term strategic objectives for 2022 was established. These outcomes are associated with each of four key principles of teaching and learning, enshrined in the Strategy, and with a detailed rationale in each case.

For each principle, some important actions taken as part of the Strategic Enhancement Plan for 2021-22 (as featured in last year's Report) are given here. Further actions planned for 2022-23 are also specified. The full set of outcomes achieved by time of writing may be found in the Appendix to this report.

1

We will provide all our students with high-quality, research-informed learning opportunities which encourage reflective practice and growth and have practical relevance to the contemporary world.

2021 - 2022

Creation of a new BA (Hons) in Theology was achieved, with approval by St. Mary's University, Twickenham, in November: thereafter, recruitment events included a College Open Day and participation in a local UCAS fair, both in March 2022, while a new student information system will be ready for September 2022. In 2022-23, provision of practical support to students on their transition to Higher Education will be rolled out for the inaugural cohort on the new BA (hons) in Theology programme.

2

We will develop and maintain a research-active community that produces original contributions to the study of Christian Theology of relevance to the Church and wider society.

2021 - 2022

Steps to develop UTC further as an active research community included: an enhanced seminar programme for research students; the signing of a collaborative agreement with the Kirby Laing Centre, Cambridge; and the planning and delivery of an international Conference, hosted by the College, on the legacy of Martin Luther in Bible translation (September 2022). In 2022-23, with the inception of the BA in Theology, the postponed goal of incorporating input from subject experts into undergraduate teaching can begin to be addressed.



3

We will foster an inclusive learning community that supports students and enables them to flourish and develop both academically, spiritually and emotionally.

2021 - 2022

A Student Transition Group was established, with a particular focus on supporting beginning students on all pathways. Arrangements for personal tutoring were reviewed, policies on disability and family pressures adopted and access to counselling services established. With the arrival of new undergraduate students, in 2022-23 it is hoped that, within the Graduate Attributes Framework, student-led volunteering activities supported by the College can be developed.

4

We will work in engaged partnership with students, external experts, collaborative partners, and stakeholders to achieve these aims.

2021 - 2022

Having set the goal of developing mutually-beneficial relationships with other Christian faith-based institutions, the College partnered with several organisations engaged in Bible translation, as part of the Conference on Martin Luther's legacy in this area. New synergies and collaborative possibilities were also explored with key agents and groups within the wider Presbyterian Church. For 2022-23, it is hoped to develop a student partnership policy and to establish an alumni network for the College.



# Quality Assurance

As already mentioned above, the concluding phase of collaboration with QUB has been marked by further support from specialist external examiners. The same is true for the ongoing development and delivery of PTFI postgraduate programmes. The College is privileged to have examiners of the highest calibre who, through their engagement in higher education in UK Universities and Colleges, are able to provide informed and independent verification of the quality of the College's offer in Theology, as well as bespoke advice and guidance that draws fully on their experience of the sector. The College records its gratitude to these critical friends.

Click here to view the 2022 QAA Report.



As also last year, in 2022 the College made its annual monitoring return to the Quality Assurance Agency in March and the Agency carried out its latest educational oversight monitoring visit to the College in May 2022. The report's stated outcome is once more that, since the last review in 2021, the College "is making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision." The College wishes to put on record its gratitude to all students and staff who contributed to the process of review, culminating in this pleasing outcome.

Two suggestions arising from review are being implemented – one relating to internal governance and the other external reference points. First, over the course of the two semesters that made up the 2021 calendar year, joint meetings were trialled between two panels that report to Faculty, with remits for quality action and academic and

student affairs respectively. Separate meetings then resumed in 2022. In the reviewers' opinion, the minutes indicated an overlap sufficient to justify their merger into one and suggest that this will ensure greater efficacy. This was achieved by merging the two committees into a new Education Committee, with postgraduate work monitored by a new Research Committee.

Second, the reviewers invited the College to consider how the Quality Code might be more systematically used for the enhancement of teaching – a timely idea, given the recent recruitment of additional academics onto the Faculty team. In response, Faculty will set aside time in 2022-23 to engage with the Quality Code and explore how its advice and guidance may be further embedded in the College's Teaching and Learning Strategy and practices.

By way of excerpts, some principal findings of the 2022 report include:

- The College's readiness to proceed with its new BA (Hons) Theology (from September 2022) under a memorandum of agreement with the validating partner, St. Mary's University, Twickenham.
- The College's ongoing strong support for students, through its disability policy, provision for counselling and wellbeing support and a range of new policies to cover family issues and pressures that students face.
- Enhanced opportunities for students to make their voice heard in College processes and, as a consequence, increased student engagement.
- Continuing commendable achievement by students in their studies, across a range of awards, as endorsed by the relevant external examiners.



# Conclusion

"As Principal, in retrospect I am profoundly grateful to all who, since summer 2021, have been instrumental in helping Union College meet its commitments, as set out in the course of the above Report. I am equally thankful at the prospect of collaborating with all who will contribute towards the outworking of the College's ministry in the coming year, in the service of students, the Church and the wider community."

**Professor Gordon Campbell**

9th September 2022





# Appendix One

## Strategic Enhancement Plan

In addition to the sample provided earlier in this report, this appendix lists the full set of goals achieved, at the time of writing, by way of interim implementation by 2022 of the four principles that lie at the heart of the Teaching and Learning Strategy as found in Appendix 2.

### Principle One

We will provide all our students with high-quality, research-informed learning opportunities which encourage reflective practice and growth and have practical relevance to the contemporary world.

The following strategic outcomes were achieved by 2022:

- A validated new undergraduate degree in Theology, in service of school-leavers
- Graduation of the first ministerial cohort with a PTFI Master of Divinity
- Addition of a Master of Theology in Old Testament to online Masters programmes
- Creation of our a new Student Information System
- Support for online students returning to study following a break

### Principle Two

We will develop and maintain a research-active community that produces original contributions to the study of Christian Theology of relevance to the Church and wider society.

The following strategic outcomes were achieved by 2022:

- Establishment and some enhancement of an active research community
- Fostering research links with other institutions, including the Kirby Laing Centre, Cambridge
- Inclusion of guest lectures or other input from research experts into postgraduate programmes
- Provision of research workshops and seminars for both online and residential postgraduate taught or research students

### Principle Three

We will foster an inclusive learning community that supports students and enables them to flourish and develop both academically, spiritually and emotionally.

The following strategic outcomes were achieved by 2022:

- Establishment of a Student Transition Group and of support for students new to or returning to higher education
- Revised Personal Tutor arrangements for ministerial, online and undergrad students
- Revision of the College equality and diversity policies
- Adoption of a policy in support of students with family pressures
- Provision of access to counselling services for students

### Principle Four

We will work in engaged partnership with students, external experts, collaborative partners and stakeholders to achieve these aims.

The following strategic outcomes were achieved by 2022:

- Establishment and some enhancement of an active research community
- Fostering research links with other institutions, including the Kirby Laing Centre, Cambridge
- Inclusion of guest lectures or other input from research experts into postgraduate programmes
- Provision of research workshops and seminars for both online and residential postgraduate taught or research students





# Appendix Two

## Teaching and Learning Strategy 2022 - 2025

The College is currently in a time of transition, moving from a long-standing relationship with Queen's University Belfast to a new relationship with St Mary's University, Twickenham (SMU) for a validated undergraduate degree in Theology. New postgraduate taught programmes have been developed and delivered since 2019 and there is a growing online postgraduate student community. The postgraduate degrees are awarded by the Presbyterian Theological Faculty, Ireland (PTFI). The College has also started to offer research degree programmes through PTFI. Therefore, it is timely for the College to put in place a five-year Teaching and Learning Strategy which establishes the parameters and context for development in the next five years. This Strategy is holistic, taking into account all stakeholders – the Church, our students, our staff, our partners and our community as a whole and setting out how the College will have a positive impact on all who come within its influence.



## Our Mission

Union Theological College welcomes students from all backgrounds to study Christian Theology in a community of faith and research-led scholarship to prepare them for life, work and service in both local and global contexts.

## Our Vision

- Equip all our students with a theological literacy that will enable them to flourish as individuals, and contribute positively to society and culture.
- Train effective ministers to lead Christ's church in fulfilling its calling in the world.
- Resource all in the Church by providing a hub for learning and research.

### Graduate Attributes

Union's graduates from its undergraduate programme should be those who are:

- Morally self-conscious, with an awareness of the virtues and values that promote human flourishing and positive social relationships
- Academically excellent, with subject-specific expertise and an appreciation of the contributions of different disciplines to theological, ethical, and cultural issues
- Learners with an aptitude for innovative, self-directed, and collaborative learning
- Intellectually flexible, with a repertoire of well-developed skills of critical thinking
- Effective communicators, who can engage with others in order to enhance their understanding and influence others in a positive and respectful manner
- Culturally literate, equipped for life and work in diverse contexts and environments
- Digitally literate, equipped for life and work in an increasingly digital world
- Proactive individuals, who can work and make decisions both independently and collaboratively
- Locally and globally engaged, with an awareness of their privileges and responsibilities and an appreciation of the concepts of vocation, enterprise, and leadership



Principles of Learning and Teaching

As a College, we will pursue our mission through a commitment to excellence in the provision of theological education, applying the following principles of teaching and learning:

- 1. We will provide all our students with high-quality, research-informed learning opportunities which encourage reflective practice and growth and have practical relevance to the contemporary world.
- 2. We will develop and maintain a research-active community that produces original contributions to the study of Christian Theology of relevance to the Church and wider society.
- 3. We will foster an inclusive learning community that supports students and enables them to flourish and develop both academically, spiritually and emotionally.
- 4. We will work in engaged partnership with students, external experts, collaborative partners, and stakeholders to achieve these aims.

Key Enablers for the Strategy

- Learning opportunities which are well-designed, innovative and inclusive
- Academic staff who are experts in their field, developed in their pedagogy and resourced and supported by the College
- Professional support staff who are pro-active, skilled and committed
- A clearly defined and mutually agreed Student Partnership
- A growing and vibrant learning community
- Research-informed Teaching

Measures of Success

- Retention and achievement metrics
- Positive student feedback
- Positive staff feedback
- Demonstrable student engagement
- Successful student recruitment

Principle One	
<p>We will provide all our students with high-quality, research-informed learning opportunities which encourage reflective practice and growth and have practical relevance to the contemporary world.</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> Students who are successful in their application to the College should expect to engage with learning opportunities which will enable them to develop skills that allow them to get the</p>	<p>most out of their College experience and prepare them for their future working lives. Each programme will have clearly defined learning outcomes with teaching and assessment methods chosen to enable students to demonstrate achievement and skills. The growth of the College’s research community will contribute to programme content. Ministry students will be stretched academically and provided with the tools to flourish in their vocation.</p>
<p><b>By 2025, we will have:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The first cohort graduating from the BA Hons Theology</li><li>• The introduction of a Graduate Diploma in Theology</li><li>• Some teaching shared with SMU</li><li>• A growing and vibrant research community providing input to the undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes</li><li>• Peer learning and mentorship opportunities for our students</li><li>• Partnership agreements with cognate institutions for student and staff exchange</li></ul> <p><b>Key Enablers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Flourishing relationship with St Mary’s University Twickenham</li><li>• Active involvement with fellow providers</li></ul>	<p>in sharing best practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Well established administrative infrastructure</li><li>• Well qualified staff and pool of adjunct staff</li><li>• Student access to professional Careers Education, Information and Guidance (CEIG)</li><li>• Placement/Study Abroad opportunities</li><li>• Digital capabilities</li></ul> <p><b>Measures of Success:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meeting student recruitment numbers</li><li>• Achievement of first cohort</li><li>• Positive Student Feedback</li><li>• QAA Commendations</li><li>• Positive and constructive feedback from the Church</li></ul>

Principle Two

We will develop and maintain a research-active community that produces original contributions to the study of Christian Theology of relevance to the Church and wider society.

**Rationale:** The College has potential to develop as a research-active community with

expertise in key areas of Theology such as Biblical Studies, Systematic Theology, Church History and Practical Theology. The College will use researchers as teaching assistants to enhance the undergraduate degree and also present to the Church in general. The College will also network with other institutions in joint research projects.

By 2025, we will have:

- The first (PTFI) PhD graduates
- An established PhD programme attracting international students
- A reputation for relevant theological research and expertise
- A pool of fully trained supervisors and mentors
- A joint research project with at least one other institution
- Regular research-informed public engagements

Key Enablers:

- Academic staff who are experts in their field, developed in their research skills, and resourced and supported by the College

- Pool of appropriately qualified internal and external supervisors
- A well-established and effective administrative support infrastructure

Measures of Success:

- Successful PhD students
- Minimum withdrawals
- Research-informed modules on PG and UG programmes
- Student Feedback
- Seminars for public square
- Faculty research output

Principle Three

We will foster an inclusive learning community that supports students and enables them to flourish and develop both academically, spiritually and emotionally.

**Rationale:** Our academic programmes are open to all, irrespective of faith commitments.

A mix of ideas and life experiences provides for a dynamic, mature and reflective experience. A holistic approach means that our undergraduates will develop the graduate attributes listed above. The College will provide a framework for holistic development with a Christian ethos.

By 2025, we will have:

- A fully developed student resilience and wellbeing programme
- Student peer mentors

Key Enablers:

- Fully resourced student support team
- Links with a range of organisations, both community and faith-based
- Revised Personal Tutor guidance to reflect the needs of both the on-campus and the online student communities

Measures of Success:

- Retention and completion rates
- Student Feedback
- Student engagement
- Positive and constructive feedback from partners

Principle Four

We will work in engaged partnership with students, external experts, collaborative partners, and stakeholders to achieve these aims.

**Rationale:** As a small specialist institution, Union will take the opportunity to forge links and develop relationships with others to enable students to flourish. We will listen to our students and our other stakeholders to develop

our teaching, learning and research and our student community. We will provide a learning hub for the wider Church from which to disseminate knowledge, research and practice which is relevant to the Church in society. We will partner with other similar institutions in order to identify and share best practice and relationships of benefit to all parties.

By 2025, we will have:

- Established collaborative relationships with key partners and begun mutually beneficial endeavours
- Developed a mature and mutually beneficial relationship with St Mary's University, Twickenham
- Implemented a formal communication strategy which includes social media
- Established a regular programme of events/podcasts/teaching for the wider Church
- Put into effect a student partnership policy

Key Enablers:

- Staff Resources
- Student engagement
- Network of key partners

Measures of Success:

- Student Feedback
- Feedback from the Church
- Increasing engagement from the Church
- Feedback from partners



As originally conceived, the above Strategy incorporated interim goals (By 2022, we will have...). Appendix 1 lists those that have already been achieved, while under Pursuing Union's Mission the section on the Strategy (pp.8-9) outlines for 2022-23 some further goals – whether those that could not be achieved owing to postponement of the launch of the BA (Hons) in Theology, or those that have been formulated additionally since 2020.





We are Union.  
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