Programme Title: MA in Theology	Final Award: Master of Arts (MA)

Programme Distinctives

- This MA is a 'Category 3' professional or practice master's degree that is designed to provide broad and contextualized understanding of theological issues;[1]
- An integrated strategy of teaching, learning and assessment that enables the student to demonstrate the intended learning outcomes;[2]
- The intentional development and nurture of critical research and writing skills designed to provide a strong foundation for postgraduate research in the field;
- A flexible and innovative digital distance education programme that prioritises accessibility and enables students to benefit from structured learning resources in their own time and at their own pace;
- Student development takes place in conversation with a diverse group of students from around the world through immersive digital engagement; and
- Digital learning is enhanced by a combination of video lectures, seminars, discussion boards and forums, and Cerego (a tool which builds on the latest in cognitive science to help students learn faster and remember longer).

Vocational Opportunities:

- The course offers a pathway into theological study for those from a wide range of backgrounds
- The course is particularly tailored to provide further training and ongoing development for Christian leaders
- The course is also designed to prepare students for Christian ministry
- Enhanced skills of analytical thinking and the ability to express oneself clearly in writing are all highly sought after by a diverse range of employers
- The nature of the course enhances a spectrum of digital capabilities.

Criteria for Admissions:

Typically, at least a low 2.1 degree, or equivalent qualification. Further, as the Degree Characteristics Statement notes programmes 'in this category …often attract entrants with a

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[1] This is in line with section 1.2 of the QAA's Characteristics Statement: Master's Degree which states that one purpose of a master's degree is 'enabling students to focus on a particular aspect of a broader subject area in which they have prior knowledge or experience through previous study or employment'. The QAA Characteristics Statement: Master's Degree (2015), 5, lists the post-experience MA as an example of this type of master's degree.

[2] See section 3.3 of the Characteristics statement: 'Assessment methods are also diverse and vary significantly depending upon the overall aims of a particular programme'.

bachelor's degree with honours or equivalent, or experience that may or may not be directly relevant to the particular profession.'[3]

We typically require 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.[4]
- International English Language Testing System (IELTS) Academic module (not General Training): overall score of 7.0 with at least 6.0 in each category.[5]
- Pearson Test of English, (PTE Academic): 67 overall with a minimum of 56 in each communicative skill
- Cambridge English Scale (CAE or CPE): 185 overall, with a minimum of 169 in each skill
- 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.

Successful applicants are enrolled as members of Union Theological College, Belfast.

Application Process:

Application information is available online. The application process is completed online. Please note that there is a non-refundable application fee.

Prospective students are required to complete the online application and to supply the following as proof that they meet the entrance requirements for this programme.

- *Curriculum vitae*
- Sample of academic work (2,000 words)
- Two letters in support of your application (at least one of which must be an academic reference)
- Verified academic transcript(s) and a verified copy (or copies) of degree certificates (and, if necessary, an official English translation)
- English language requirement certificate (if applicable)
- A copy of the photo page of your passport (non-EU students)

Mode of Study	Part-time or Full-time
Type of Programme	Postgraduate Taught (PGT)

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[3] See The QAA Characteristics Statement: Master's Degree (2015), 5.
[4] For the list of recognised countries visit https://www.gov.uk/tier-4-general-visa/knowledge-of-english
[5] The IELTS (International English Language Testing System) Academic test is our preferred test. Details can be obtained from local British Council Offices.

Total Credits for Programme	180 CATS[6]
Length of Programme	Full-time (12 months from start) or part-time (2-4 years) Full-time study requires 3 modules in the first semester of study, 3 modules in the second semester, and the Dissertation/Research Project in the third semester.
Exit Award	Master of Arts (MA) Students exiting the programme before completion may qualify for a Postgraduate Certificate in Theology or a Postgraduate Diploma in Theology.
Awarding Institution/Body	The Presbyterian Theological Faculty, Ireland (PTFI)
Teaching Institution	Union Theological College, Belfast
Framework for Higher Education Qualification	Level 7
QAA Benchmark Group	Theology and Religious Studies (2019)
Programme Coordinator	Rev'd Prof Michael McClenahan
External Examiner	Rev'd Dr Stephen Hampton (Senior Tutor of Peterhouse, University of Cambridge)

REGULATION INFORMATION

Programme Specific Regulations

In line with FHEQ standards the MA comprises 180 CATS points at master's level 7. All taught modules will normally be assessed by 100% coursework. The diverse assessment regime enables students to demonstrate the learning outcomes intended for the programme. For the six taught modules (each 25 CATS) there are three assessment elements:[7]

- Mastering specialist threshold knowledge in the Cerego learning app (10%)
- Three 1,000-word critical responses on the seminar texts (40%)
- One 3,000-word written assignment (50%)

The remaining component is the capstone dissertation of 6,000-8,000 words (30 CATS). This enables the student to develop high-level academic skills and to demonstrate evidence in original independent research and analytical thought. The range in the word count is a recognition that the wide range of possible dissertations and research projects will require varying word counts to demonstrate the learning outcomes.

The pass mark for each taught module and for the dissertation is 50%. A re-sit will be available for any taught module, the pass mark to be capped at 50% for classification purposes. The

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[6] The College's programmes have been benchmarked against the QAA Quality Code (Part A) such that 1 academic credit equates to 10 hours of study (shared between class time, pre-class reading, private study and assessment): thus, a 20 credit module should provide you with approximately 200 hours of study.
[7] See 'Assessment' in the QAA's Subject Benchmark Statement 4.20.

examiners may at their discretion request an oral examination in any aspect of the work submitted by the candidate. Candidates may not submit the dissertation until all other coursework has been passed. Candidates who do not submit a dissertation, or who are not successful in the dissertation element, may be awarded a Postgraduate Diploma in Theology.

In the case of full-time students, the dissertation shall be submitted no later than 12 months after commencing the programme. Thus, full-time students will complete the programme in one calendar year. A dissertation tutor will be provided for the dissertation writing period. In exceptional circumstances PTFI may grant an extension to the dissertation period but this will be subject to extended programme fees.

For part-time students, all taught modules, taken over a 12-week semester, must be completed within four years from enrolment (i.e. within eight semesters). The dissertation is to be written in no more than a twelve-month period. The earliest submission date for the dissertation is 24 months after enrolment and the latest submission date is four years after enrolment. The submission date must always be approved by the PTFI and a dissertation tutor will be provided for the final three months before submission. In exceptional circumstances PTFI may grant an extension to this three-month period but this is subject to extended supervision fees and the date may not be later than four years and three months after enrolment.

The regulations governing the presentation of the dissertation shall be set out in the Dissertation module document.

In order to be awarded the MA a student should pass all modules. Providing that all programme learning outcomes have been successfully demonstrated, a student who does not pass all modules will nonetheless be considered to have met the award requirements if they meet all of the following criteria:

- fail no more than 30 credits, AND
- pass the remaining credits, AND
- achieve a credit-weighted mean of at least 50% across all modules.

The degree of Master of Arts may be awarded either simpliciter, with commendation, or with distinction. To achieve the award with commendation an overall average of 60% or more is required. In order to receive the award with distinction candidates must achieve an overall average mark of 70% or higher.

AIMS OF PROGRAMME

This programme aims to:

- enable students to focus in appropriate depth on a variety of different topics within the subdisciplines of Christian Theology and ethics;
- provide opportunities for students to reflect upon and integrate prior study and other relevant experience with a wide range of new learning which is informed by research-led scholarship;
- provide a digital space in which students may engage in informed and respectful dialogue, recognising the strengths and weaknesses of other points of view;

- provide the knowledge and skills necessary to produce a research dissertation through sustained reflection on and engagement with a theological or ethical topic; and
- develop an appreciation of the value of Christian doctrine for the life of the Church.

TEACHING METHODS

A wide variety of teaching and learning methods are employed and include the following:

- Video lectures to provide an overall perspective on each module's subject area and to designate the parameters of the syllabus,
- Technology-based learning through a platform that utilises study sets with the innovative educational tool Cerego,
- Live (online) class seminars and interactive discussion forums create a dynamic learning interface for direct engagement, in community, with seminar texts,
- Research skills are nurtured in taught modules and the dissertation.

Dissertation supervision by members of Union Theological College Faculty supported by a dissertation tutor assigned to guide students through the final three-month phase.

PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Learning Outcomes: Knowledge and Understanding

By completion of the MA programme a successful student should have demonstrated:

- an advanced and systematic understandings of a range of the major loci of Christian doctrine with reference to the following:
  - their exegetical basis;
  - their confessional expression;
  - the writings of theologians who have made significant theological contributions towards the formulation of these topics (both historical and contemporary); and
  - the different theological methodologies used in their study; and
  - the relevance of these doctrines to contemporary theological and ethical issues.

2. Learning Outcomes: Skills

By completion of the MA programme a successful student should have demonstrated:

- a high level of **critical awareness**, currency in theological research, and the potential for original thinking in the subject;
- the range of techniques of postgraduate research and enquiry necessary to **access, organise, create and interpret knowledge** within the discipline (not necessarily new knowledge);

- the ability to **read and interpret** relevant primary and secondary in a way which is: **careful and sophisticated**; discerns and draws out theological assumptions; and assesses their consequences and contribution to Christian doctrine and ethics;
- the ability to **analyse complex issues** involving Christian doctrine and **construct well-framed and apt** responses which: integrate Biblical exegesis; sensitively apply sophisticated ideas;
- a high level of **presentational and communication skills** in the construction and articulation of cogent, well-informed, critically-engaged, and sustained arguments within the discipline;
- the capacity to reflect upon and articulate one's own theological tradition as well as **engage in informed and respectful dialogue with other points of view**, particularly about controversial theological issues, recognising the strengths and weaknesses of other theological traditions and the methodological and philosophical issues involved; and
- competency in postgraduate research skills by evidencing **self-direction, initiative, independence, and originality** in planning and producing a dissertation.

TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS AND STRATEGIES

- In coordination with their supervisor, students will undertake a course of study through reading, online lectures, seminars, peer interaction and personal supervision that is designed to provide breadth and depth in their understanding of Christian theology and ethics.
- Lectures and guided readings highlight areas of ongoing debate and model the knowledge and skills described in the learning outcomes.
- Student-centred learning situations involving seminar 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. Students receive feedback (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.
- Access to the dedicated immersive digital environment will further develop and enhance digital competencies.
- Feedback is provided on all written work in order to develop sophisticated writing skills, the ability to present sustained and persuasive arguments, and the charitable assessment of the views and positions of others.
- Feedback is provided on all written work in order to develop critical thinking skills, to hone skills in assessing primary and secondary sources, and to develop the ability to advance sophisticated arguments.
- The MA programme encourages students to become independent learners by way of a combination of bespoke research activities which map onto a student's individual plan, and more general training research methods germane to the discipline.
- Training in research methods is incorporated into the taught modules.
- Cerego sets help students gain fluency and mastery of threshold knowledge within theological ethics and quizzes are provided to aid in self-assessment

- The 3,000-word essays include directed indicative reading both within and outside a student's own tradition.
- The *breadth* of the learning experience is enriched through personal research for the completion of written assignments.
- The *depth* of the learning experience is enhanced by supervision from those with subject-specific expertise.
- Active digital dialogue with peers in the cohort is designed to enhance one's ability to communicate views and discuss controversial issues in a sensitive and effective manner.

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES AND METHODS

A variety of these assessments (both formative and summative) are used across the MA programme to enable students to demonstrate the intended outcomes of knowledge and skills.

Strategies:

- Undertaking discipline-specific analysis of texts and contexts in pursuit of scholarly objectives, and theoretical rigour.
- Significant engagement with and critical reflection upon the influential ideas, theories and approaches shaping academic discourse within theology and ethics
- The reconstruction of the context of the production of ideas and evaluation of their influence on society at different historical periods as well as in the contemporary world.
- Gathering, organising and deploying evidence, data and information from a variety of secondary and some primary sources, so as to formulate and support a line of reasoning, or argument. Responding to alternative views and challenges to propositions made in research.
- Discriminating between what is central and peripheral in a complex text or situation.

Methods:

- Cerego sets allow students to demonstrate the value and utility of incremental learning and assessed the degree of mastery of specialist threshold knowledge within the discipline.
- Online seminars and forums provide excellent immersive digital engagement and formative feedback as students interact with subject experts and peers in the analysis of subjects, themes and ideas.
- The reflective responses to seminar texts are designed to assess analytical, discursive, interpretative and critical skills in theology and ethics and to test the ability of students to engage with, analyse, contextualise, interpret and criticise relevant material.
- Essays and other written assignments allow students to demonstrate:
    o the ability to engage with stipulated reading;
    o the initiative to engage in a wider exploration of the subject; and
    o many of the other intended learning outcomes of the programme.
- The dissertation/research project enables the student to demonstrate:

o the results of independent research on a specialised topic;
o an ability for critical evaluation of scholarly views;
o an appropriate measure of insight and originality;
o appropriate presentational, bibliographical, and discipline-specific skills; and many of the other intended learning outcomes of the programme.

PROGRAMME REQUIREMENTS

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

Module Title	Level/ stage	CATS	Duration of teaching or supervision	Core	Assessment		
					Coursework %	Practical %	Exam %
Doctrine of God	7	25	12 weeks	•	100%		
Christology	7	25	12 weeks	•	100%		
The Holy Spirit	7	25	12 weeks	•	100%		
Salvation	7	25	12 weeks	•	100%		
Christian Ethics	7	25	12 weeks	•	100%		
Eschatology	7	25	12 weeks	•	100%		
Dissertation / Research Project (6,000 - 8,000 words)	7	30	As outlined above in this document	•	100%		

REFERENCE POINTS

• Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives – cognitive domains

• The UK Quality Code for Higher Education

• The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications

• Subject Benchmark Statement for Theology & Religious Studies

• Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Master's Degree Characteristics

• Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Building a Taxonomy for Digital Learning

- UTC Quality Action Plan

- Draft of the UTC Teaching and Learning Strategy

- UTC Assessment policy

- Review of existing modules in programme

- Student, Staff, and External Examiner feedback and comments