

Master of Divinity
Academic Year 2020/21
Programme Specification¹

Programme Title:	Master of Divinity	Final Award:	Master of Divinity (MDiv)
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Programme Distinctives

- This MDiv is a ‘professional or practice master’s degree’ aimed at enabling graduates to qualify for entry into a profession, in this case the ordained Christian ministry.² According to the QAA Subject Benchmark, the MDiv award ‘tends to provide a fairly broad curriculum (often encompassing the five disciplines normally required for Christian ministry: Old Testament, New Testament, systematic theology, church history, and pastoral theology), and may be a qualification leading to ordination’.³
- An integrated strategy of teaching, learning and assessment that enables the student to demonstrate the intended learning outcomes.⁴

Vocational Opportunities

- 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 research at MTh level; and
- the transferrable skills which are developed are all highly sought after by a diverse range of employers.

CRITERIA FOR ADMISSIONS

Typically, a 2.1 honours degree or above, or equivalent qualification. Further, as the Degree Characteristics Statement notes programmes ‘in this category ... often attract

¹ All programmes of the Presbyterian Theological Faculty, Ireland (PTFI) are subject to Union Theological College’s Quality Assurance processes.

² The QAA [Characteristics Statement: Master’s Degree](#) (2015), 5, lists the MDiv as an example of this type of master’s degree.

³ The QAA [Subject Benchmark Statement: Theology and Religious Studies](#) (2014), 24.

⁴ 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’.

entrants with a bachelor's degree with honours or equivalent, or experience that may or may not be directly relevant to the particular profession'.⁵

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.⁶
- International English Language Testing System (IELTS) Academic module (not General Training): overall score of 7.0 with at least 6.5 in each category.⁷
- Pearson Test of English, (PTE Academic): 69 overall with a minimum of 62 in each communicative skill
- Cambridge English Scale (CAE or CPE): 185 overall, with a minimum of 176 in each skill
- TOEFL iBT: 100 overall with a minimum of 24 in writing and 23 in each of the other skills.

Degrees taught and assessed in English should normally be no more than three years old at the beginning of the MDiv 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:

This programme is the normal academic pathway for students training for ministry in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Nevertheless, entry to this programme is not automatic for PCI ministry students and they must complete the normal Union College application process.

Prospective students must supply the following as proof that they meet the entrance requirements for this programme.

- *Curriculum vitae*
- Sample of academic work
- Two signed references (at least one of which should, if possible, 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)

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

⁶ For the list of recognised countries visit <https://www.gov.uk/tier-4-general-visa/knowledge-of-english>

⁷ The IELTS (International English Language Testing System) Academic test is our preferred test. Details can be obtained from local British Council Offices.

Mode of Study	Part Time
Type of Programme	Postgraduate Taught (PGT)
Total Credits for Programme	180 CATS ⁸
Length of Programme	Part time over three years
Exit Award	Master of Divinity (MDiv)
Awarding Institution/Body	The Presbyterian Theological Faculty, Ireland (PTFI)
Teaching Institution	Union Theological College, Belfast
Programme Coordinator	Prof Gordon Campbell
Framework for Higher Education Qualification	Level 7
QAA Benchmark Group	Theology and Religious Studies (2014) http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements
External Examiner Name:	Rev'd Dr Stephen Skuce

REGULATION INFORMATION

Programme Specific Regulations

In line with FHEQ standards, the MDiv 180-credit programme may comprise up to 30 credits at level 6 and at least 150 credits at level 7 (at present all modules are offered only at level 7). Students will, normally, write an 8,000-word dissertation on a topic approved by the Faculty (30 CATS).

The pass mark for each taught module at level 7 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 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. The dissertation shall be submitted no later than three years after commencing the programme. The regulations governing the presentation of the dissertation shall be the Regulations for Theses. In exceptional circumstances PTFI may grant an extension to the dissertation period but this will be subject to extended programme fees.

⁸ 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 30-credit module should provide you with approximately 300 hours of study.

Candidates who do not submit a dissertation, or who are not successful in the dissertation element, may be awarded a Postgraduate Diploma in Theology, provided that the student has met or surpassed the standard for such an interim qualification.

In order to be awarded the MDiv a student should pass all modules (a minimum of 150 credits at level 7). However, 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 Divinity 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 over, together with a mark of 70% or over in the dissertation element, and an average of 65% or more across the other modules.

AIMS OF PROGRAMME

- 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.

TEACHING METHODS

A wide variety of teaching and learning methods are employed to enrich the students' learning experience and include the following:

- lectures, directed reading, seminars, tutorials, student group-work and independent learning;
- some teaching may be delivered by blended learning through modules from Union online programmes; and
- dissertation or research project supervision.

PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Learning Outcomes: Knowledge and Understanding

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

- an advanced understanding of the Biblical texts and the knowledge interpret them competently;
- an advanced and systematic understanding of hermeneutical methodology(ies) and their relevance to the interpretation of Biblical texts;
- an advanced understanding of the methodological and hermeneutical models and assumptions used in the application of Biblical texts to contemporary ministry contexts;
- an advanced and thorough understanding of the diverse contributions of those texts to biblical theology, systematic theology, historical theology, and pastoral ministry.
- an advanced and systematic understandings of a variety of key doctrines with reference to the following:
 - Biblical texts;
 - major theologians and their writings (both historical and contemporary);
 - different theological methodologies; and
 - the contemporary church.
- an advanced and systematic understanding of selected periods of church history and historical theology, a thorough understanding of the methodological and historiographical models and assumptions used in assessing the significance history for the contemporary church;
- an advanced understanding of how the Christian faith engages with various contemporary ethical and pastoral issues, and a thorough understanding of relevant methodologies.

2. Learning Outcomes: Skills

By completion of the MDiv programme a successful student should have demonstrated the following skills.

- 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, their theological and pastoral consequences in contemporary ministry contexts, whilst assessing those theories and views and, where appropriate, proposing alternatives.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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;
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- The competency in postgraduate research skills to access current research and make original applications of knowledge (not necessarily the creation of new knowledge).

TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS AND STRATEGIES

- 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.
- 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. 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.

- Student-centred learning situations involving verbal presentation (both formal and informal) develop the ability to present, summarise, evaluate and analyse texts, doctrines and contexts and their application to the church and contemporary culture. 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.
- Written assignments include directed indicative reading from various confessional traditions which increases the *breadth* of the learning experience.
- 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.
- Critical book review assessments provide an opportunity to engage with significant works that operate under different assumptions and which employ different methodologies.
- Since the coursework requires students to work on their own to an agreed deadline, the students are enabled to become independent and responsible learners within the overall structure of the MDiv.
- The process of research and writing itself and the subsequent feedback which is provided on all submissions helps to develop sophisticated writing skills, the ability to present sustained and persuasive arguments, and independent thought.
- Exams and other forms of class tests require substantial engagement with texts and doctrines and the ability to engage critically with course content.
- Training in research methods is incorporated into all the taught modules.

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES AND METHODS

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

Strategies:

- Undertaking discipline-specific analysis of texts and contexts (translation, exegesis, literary-critical analysis, historical analysis, cultural analysis, and complex pastoral situations) in pursuit of scholarly objectives, and theoretical rigour.
- Critical reflection upon the influential ideas, theories and approaches shaping academic discourse across the five disciplines.
- Significant engagement with influential contemporary and historical thinking and thinkers.

- 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:

- 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.
- Journalling encourages sustained reflective and evaluative practice.
- Individual presentations allow students to demonstrate the presentation of fluent and cogent arguments in written and oral form.
- Group presentations encourage students to collaborate with peers and negotiate the demands of teamwork.
- 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.
- 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.

Programme Requirements

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

Module Title	Level/ stage	CATS							Core	Assessment		
			2019/20 Autumn	2019/20 Spring	2020/21 Autumn	2020/21 Spring	2021/22 Autumn	2021/22 Spring		Course work	Practical	Exam

Synoptic Gospels & Acts	7	20		•					•	40%	10%	50%
OT Prophetic Texts	7	20						•	•	60%		40%
Pauline Theology	7	20					•		•	40%	10%	50%
Presbyterian Polity	7	10			•				•	100%		
Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) 1	7	10			•							
WCF 2	7	10			•							
Reformed Catholic Dogmatics	7	30					•		•	100%		
Reformation Theology: Past, Present and Future	7	30	•						•	100%		
Dissertation or research project (8,000 words)	7	30							•	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
- 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