

Master of Theology in Reformed Theology

Programme Specification¹

Programme Title: Reformed Theology

Final Award: Master of Theology (MTh)

Programme Distinctives:

- This MTh is a specialised, advanced study, master's degree that is designed to enhance prior theological training by providing a rigorous grounding in the historical theology of the Reformed doctrinal tradition;²
- An integrated strategy of teaching, learning and assessment that enables the student to demonstrate the intended learning outcomes;³
- 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 online 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 a dedicated virtual learning environment; and
- Online learning is enhanced by a combination of video lectures, discussion boards, and Cerego (a tool which builds on the latest in cognitive science to help students learn faster and remember longer).

Vocational Opportunities:

- The course is particularly tailored to provide further training and ongoing development for ministers
- The course is also designed to prepare students for doctoral research in the fields of systematic theology, historical theology, or ecclesiastical history.
- 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

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

² 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'. This programme is classified as a Category 2 master's degree by QAA. Appendix A of the QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Theology and Religious Studies (A1.1 and A2.3) specifically offers the MTh in Reformed Theology as an example of how a master's degree in theology and religious studies can enable specialism at a more advanced level.

³ 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'.

Typically, a 2.1 honours degree or above or equivalent qualification acceptable to PTFI where Theology and/or Divinity is the main subject area OR where it is one of the joint subjects in an honours degree. In the case of the latter, the modules in Theology and/or Divinity must be of 2.1 level or above, OR a 2.1 honours degree or equivalent qualification acceptable to PTFI in a subject other than Theology/Divinity, and a Graduate Diploma in Theology with normally at least 5 out of the 6 modules with a mark of 60% or above.

Note: 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.

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 no less than 7.0 with a minimum of 6.5 in each category.⁵
- 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 must be no more than three years old at the beginning of the MTh 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:

The application process is completed online and the deadline for applications is 15 December 2018. 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 signed references (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)

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.

Mode of Study	Full Time or Part Time
Type of Programme	Postgraduate Taught (PGT)
Total Credits for Programme	180 CATS
Length of Programme	Full time (12 months) or part time (2-4 years)
Exit Award	Master of Theology (MTh)
Awarding Institution/Body	The Presbyterian Theological Faculty, Ireland (PTFI)
Teaching Institution	Union Theological College, Belfast
Programme Coordinator	Dr Martyn Cowan
Framework for Higher Education Qualification	Level 7
QAA Benchmark Group	Theology and Religious Studies (2014)
External Examiner Name:	The Rev'd Dr Stephen Hampton (Senior tutor of Peterhouse, University of Cambridge)

REGULATION INFORMATION

Programme Specific Regulations

In line with FHEQ standards the MTh 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 four taught modules (each 30 CATS) there are four assessment elements:⁶

- Mastering specialist threshold knowledge in the Cerego learning app (10%)
- Written responses to the module textbook (20%)
- Written responses to the core primary text (20%)
- 3,000-word written assignment (50%)

The remaining component is the capstone dissertation of 15,000 words (60 CATS).⁷ This enables the student to develop high-level academic skills and to demonstrate evidence in original independent research and analytical thought.

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 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

⁶ See 'Assessment' in the QAA's Subject Benchmark Statement 4.20 and the Union Theological College Assessment Policy.

⁷ This is in line with the QAA description of a Category 2 master's in that at least a third of the programme is devoted to a research project.

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 twelve 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 three-month dissertation 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 twelve-week semester and three-week submission period must be completed within three years from enrolment. The dissertation is to be written in no more than a twelve-month period. The earliest submission date for the dissertation is twenty-four 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 after commencing the programme. The regulations governing the presentation of the dissertation shall be the Regulations for Theses.

In order to be awarded the MTh a student should pass all modules. 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 Theology 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 prior theological study through a programme focused on the advanced study of Reformed Theology, particularly some of its main doctrines and its historical development in diverse contexts;
- to provide opportunity for students to reflect upon and integrate their prior theological study (and usually their experience of Christian ministry) with new learning which is informed by research-led and research-focused scholarship;
- to provide a digital space in which students may engage in informed and respectful dialogue, recognising the strengths and weaknesses of other points of view;

- to provide the knowledge and skills necessary to produce original research through sustained reflection on and engagement with a theological and/or historical topic; and
- to develop an appreciation of the vocation of a Christian theologian and to strengthen and sharpen the intellectual habits and practical skills necessary for such a calling.

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, quizzes for self-assessment, and class discussion forums
- Interactive discussion forums create a dynamic learning interface for direct engagement, in community, with primary sources and module textbooks
- Development of guided research skills
- 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 this MTh programme a successful student should have demonstrated:

1. an advanced and systematic understanding of a selection of the major loci of Reformed dogmatics, their exegetical basis, and interconnectedness;
2. an advanced and systematic understanding of the historical development of the Reformed tradition in diverse contexts, especially its emergence from the medieval context, and its development in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries;
3. an advanced understanding of how Reformed theology engages with various contemporary theological issues and debates; and
4. a thorough understanding of the methodological, hermeneutical and historiographical models and assumptions used in the study of Reformed dogmatics and history of the Reformed tradition.

Teaching/Learning Methods and Strategies

In coordination with their tutor, students will gain knowledge and understanding through:

- online video lectures which provide an overall perspective on each module and which exemplify discussion on the topics in question, especially by considering and assessing different views within the discipline and differing explanations of complicated material;
- instruction in the nature of the module assessment;
- guided independent reading that is designed to provide breadth and depth in their understanding of Reformed Theology;
- engaging with others in the online forums in order to discuss and consolidate knowledge;
- completing exercises which enable sustained engagement with relevant primary and secondary texts;
- mastering subject-specific material through the responsive application Cerego which provides instant formative feedback and allows students to chart their own progress towards the desired goal;
- the formative nature of all the other written assessment tasks;
- individual written (and at times oral) feedback on written submissions;
- dissertation supervision helps students develop and assess their progress.

Methods of Assessment

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

- the level of mastery achieved by a process of spaced rehearsal within the responsive application Cerego;
- 1,000-word responses to questions posed on primary and secondary texts assess particularly the breadth of knowledge and understanding;
- Online students are required to post to forums on a certain number of occasions (this requirement is on a pass/fail basis and does not contribute to the summative grade);
- 3,000-word research essays particularly assess the depth of understanding; and
- a 15,000-word capstone dissertation provides students with an opportunity to display most, if not all, the programme level learning outcomes for knowledge and understanding.

2. Learning Outcomes: Skills

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

5. a high level of critical awareness, currency in theological research, and the potential for original thinking in the subject;
6. the range of techniques of research and enquiry necessary to access, organise, create and interpret knowledge within the discipline;
7. the ability to read and interpret relevant texts with rigour and sophistication, particularly with regard to their contexts and consequences, and with an awareness of how chosen methodologies shape outcomes;
8. the ability to deal systematically and creatively with complex issues and to make sound judgments, on the basis of varied and problematic sources;

9. 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;
10. 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, philosophical, hermeneutical and historiographical issues involved;
11. competency in postgraduate research skills by evidencing self-direction, initiative, independence, and originality in planning and producing a substantial dissertation.

Teaching/Learning Methods and Strategies

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

- the full range of skills is deliberately modelled through the video lectures provided on the VLE, tutor participation in forums, detailed tutor feedback on assessed work, and dissertation supervision;
- guided independent reading on primary and secondary texts is designed so that students engage with authors who model these skills;
- the assessment tasks on the primary and secondary tasks enable the students to demonstrate these skills;
- the 1,000-word assignments which provide *breadth* to the learning experience;
- the 3,000-word assignments provide *depth* to the learning experience;
- the posting of 1,000-word pieces of the discussion forum is formative since it enables students to observe how other students are developing these skills;
- the required dialogue with other students is designed to enhance a student's ability to communicate views and discuss controversial issues in a sensitive and effective manner;
- one-to-one dissertation supervision from those with subject-specific expertise in Reformed Dogmatics and historical theology prioritises research skills training

Methods of Assessment

Written assignments provide a vehicle for demonstrating these skills:

- the 1,000-word responses to questions posed on the primary and secondary texts assess, in particular, the *breadth* of the skills which a student has acquired;
- Online students are required to post to forums on a certain number of occasions (this requirement is on a pass/fail basis and does not contribute to the summative grade);
- the 3,000-word research essays particularly assess the *depth* of skills; and
- the 15,000-word capstone dissertation provides students with an opportunity to display most, if not all, the programme level learning outcomes for skills, particularly the ability to engage in self-guided research which reaches independent conclusions.

PROGRAMME REQUIREMENTS

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

Module Title	Level/ stage	CATS	Availability in 2020/21			Duration of teaching or supervision	Core	Assessment		
			Autumn	Spring	Summer			Coursework %	Practical %	Exam %
Creeds, Councils and Confessions	7	30	•			12 weeks	•	100%		
Reformation Theology: Past, Present and Future	7	30	•		•	12 weeks	•	100%		
The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity	7	30		•		12 weeks	•	100%		
The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit	7	30		•		12 weeks	•	100%		
Dissertation (15,000 words)	7	60	•		•	12 weeks	•	100%		

BRIEF SUMMARIES OF TAUGHT MODULES:

Creeds, Councils and Confessions (PTF214)

- 15 video lectures by Justin Holcomb from Zondervan Academic (5 hrs)
- Cerego study sets (60 learning items)
- Written exercises and discussion forums on the following:
 - Primary text – *The Westminster Confession of Faith*
 - Textbook – Michael Allen and Scott Swain, *Reformed Catholicity: The Promise of Retrieval for Theology and Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, 2015)
- Guided research essay of 3,000 words

Reformation Theology: Past, Present and Future (PTF201)

- 15 video lectures by John Woodbridge and Frank James from Zondervan Academic (7 hrs 21 mins)
- Cerego study sets (60 learning items)
- Written exercises and discussion forums on the following:
 - Primary Text – Book 1 of John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*
 - Textbook – Matthew Barrett's *Reformation Theology: A Systematic Summary* (Wheaton, 2017)
- Guided research essay of 3,000 words

The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity (PTF215)

- 16 video lectures by Fred Sanders from Zondervan Academic (2 hrs 20 mins)
- Cerego study sets (60 learning items)
- Written exercises and discussion forums on the following:
 - Primary text – John Owen’s *Communion with God*
 - Textbook – Fred Sanders, *The Triune God* (Grand Rapids, 2016)
- Guided research essay of 3,000 words

The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit (PTF216)

- 12 video lectures by Sinclair Ferguson from Ligonier (5 hrs)
- Cerego study sets (60 learning items)
- Written exercises and discussion forums on the following:
 - Primary text – Jonathan Edwards, *Treatise on Grace*
 - Textbook – Michael S Horton, *Rediscovering the Holy Spirit: God’s Perfecting Presence in Creation, Redemption, and Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids, 2017)
- Guided research essay of 3,000 words

Capstone dissertation (PTF402)

- 15,000-word dissertation

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