Union Theological College

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MTh Theological Ethics

Awarding Body	Presbyterian Theological Faculty Ireland (PTFI)
Teaching Body	Union Theological College, 108 Botanic Avenue, Belfast BT7 1JT
Type of Collab. Arrangement	Validation Arrangement governed by a Memorandum of Agreement
Award Title	MTh Theological Ethics
Final Award	MTh Theological Ethics
Exit Award(s)	PG Certificate in Theological Ethics (60 CATS) PG Diploma in Theological Ethics (120 CATS)
Department	Theology
Language of Study	English
FHEQ Level	Level 7
JACS Code	V610
QAA Subject Benchmark	QAA Benchmark Theology and Religious Studies (2022)
Normal Completion Time & Max Duration of Study	Full-time study - one calendar year Part-time study – all taught modules must be completed within three years of enrolment. The dissertation is to be written in no more than a 12-month period. The earliest submission date for the dissertation is 24 months after enrolment and the latest submission date is four years after enrolment.
Mode of Study	Full-time/Part-time
Mode of Delivery	Online
Date Approved and Name of Authorised Body	25 June 2025, Presbyterian Theological Faculty Ireland (PTFI)
Applies to Students Commencing Study in (month/year)	September 2025 (full-time and part-time entry) January 2026 (part-time entry only)

Summary of the Programme

The MTh is a specialised, advanced study Master's degree in the area of Theological Ethics. The degree permits pathways of specialisation in theological studies, ethics, and applied theology. It is intended to bring students to the point where they can consider embarking upon doctoral research. The course is also particularly tailored to provide further training and ongoing development for ministers or can function as a self-contained and satisfying course of study in its own right.

Aims of the 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 discipline of Christian theological ethics;
- to provide opportunity for students to reflect upon and integrate their relevant prior learning and experience with new learning that 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 provide the knowledge and skills necessary to produce original research, through sustained reflection on and engagement with an appropriate topic in theological ethics, thereby preparing students for potential progression to doctoral research or for application in ministerial and professional contexts; and
- To develop an appreciation of the vocation of the Christian ethicist, and to cultivate the analytical, theological, and communicative skills necessary to make contributions to ethical debate; particularly the ability to address complex theological and moral issues both systematically and creatively, to exercise sound judgment, and to articulate well-reasoned conclusions clearly and effectively

Criteria for Admission

Typically, admission requires a 2.1 honours degree or above or equivalent qualification acceptable to PTFI, where the main subject area or one of the joint subjects in an honours degree comprised one of: Theology/Divinity or Biblical studies. If the above subject was one of the joint subjects in an honours degree, the modules in the qualifying area must be of 2.1 level or above, OR a 2.1 honours degree or equivalent qualification acceptable to PTFI in a related subject.

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

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

- An undergraduate or master's degree that was taught and assessed in English in a majority English-speaking country as defined by UK Visas and Immigration.
- International English Language Testing System (IELTS) Academic module (not General Training): overall score of 7.0 with at least 6.5 in each category.

- Pearson Test of English, Academic: PTE(A) total 69 (at least 62 in each of the 'communicative skills' sections).
- Cambridge Proficiency (CPE) or Cambridge Advanced (CAE): total 185 (at least 176 in each module).
- 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.

Credit Accumulation & Transfer, and Accreditation of Prior Learning

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

Programme Outcomes

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

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

- an advanced and systematic understanding of a selection of the major loci of Christian theology, their exegetical basis and interconnectedness, and their relevance for Christian ethics;
- an advanced and systematic understanding of the history and diverse traditions of Christian theological ethics;
- a thorough understanding of the methodological and philosophical models and assumptions used in the study theological ethics; and
- an advanced understanding of how Christian theology engages with various contemporary theological issues and ethical debates.

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

- a high level of critical awareness, currency in theological ethical research, and the potential for original thinking in the subject;
- the range of techniques of research and enquiry necessary to access, organise, create and interpret knowledge within the discipline;
- 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;
- the ability to deal systematically and creatively with complex issues and to make sound judgments, on the basis of varied and problematic sources;
- 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 ethical tradition as well as engage in informed and respectful dialogue with other points of view, particularly about controversial

ethical issues, recognising the strengths and weaknesses of other ethical traditions and the methodological and philosophical issues involved;
- competency in postgraduate research skills by evidencing self-direction, initiative, independence, and originality in planning and producing a substantial dissertation.

Programme Structure and Module Requirements

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

90 CATS taught modules + longer dissertation (90 CATS)[1]
OR
120 CATS taught modules + shorter dissertation (60 CATS)

Full-time:
Two modules semester 1
One module semester 2
Dissertation (90 CATS)

Part-time:
Three modules across four semesters + Dissertation (90 CATS)
OR
Four modules across four semesters + Dissertation (60 CATS)

Modules

- Ethics and the Christian Tradition (30 CATS)
- Theological Anthropology (30 CATS)
- Divine Revelation and Moral Reasoning (30 CATS)
- Contemporary Issues in Social Ethics (30 CATS)
- Dissertation (60 CATS or 90 CATS)

Module Requirements

Each module contains the following requirements:

- Cerego learning activity
- 6 online seminars (Weeks 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11)
- 3 reflective essays (1,500 words each)
- Online forum discussion of reflective essay submissions
- 1 research essay (3,000 words)

[1] Full-time students must do the longer dissertation.

Module Schedule

Modules are delivered according to the following rotation:

- Autumn: Ethics and the Christian Tradition, Theological Anthropology, Dissertation
- Spring: Divine Revelation and Moral Reasoning, Contemporary Issues in Social Ethics, Dissertation
- Summer: Dissertation

	Autumn 2025	Spring 2026	Summer 2026	Autumn 2026	Spring 2027	Summer 2027	Autumn 2027	Spring 2028	Summer 2028
Ethics and the Christian Tradition	X			X			X		
Theological Anthropology	X			X			X		
Divine Revelation and Moral Reasoning		X			X			X	
Contemporary Issues in Social Ethics		X			X			X	
Dissertation			X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Vocational Opportunities

Employability and transferable skills

- The courses develops a number of enhanced skills that are highly sought after by employers, including the ability to: think analytically and express oneself clearly in writing; find information, organise and deploy it; work well independently, with a strong sense of self-direction, but also with the ability to work constructively in co-operation with others; effectively structure and communicate ideas in a variety of written and oral formats; plan and organise the use of time effectively, and be able to work under pressure to deadlines; make appropriate use of language skills.
- 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 Theology or Ethics.
- The nature of the course enhances a spectrum of digital capabilities.

Programme Awards

This programme conforms to the Union Theological College PGT Regulations.

Programme Teaching and Learning Strategies

Knowledge and Understanding

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

- Instruction in the nature of the module assessment.
- Guided independent reading that is designed to provide breadth and depth in their understanding of the relevant discipline.
- Engaging with tutors/peers in order to discuss and consolidate knowledge.
- Completing exercises which enable sustained engagement with relevant primary and secondary texts.
- The formative nature of all written assessment tasks.
- Individual written (and at times oral) feedback on written submissions.
- Dissertation supervision to help students to develop and assess their progress.

Skills

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

- The full range of skills is deliberately modelled through tutor teaching and input, 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 assessments tasks on the primary and secondary texts enable the students to demonstrate these skills.
- Written submissions (formative) in advance of seminars which provide *breadth* to the learning experience.
- Substantive research essays in each module which provide *depth* to the learning experience.
- The required dialogue with peers/tutors 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 the relevant discipline.

Programme Assessment Strategy

Knowledge and Understanding

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

- Cerego study sets that assess foundational and systematic knowledge of the module content.
- Three reflective essay submissions and online discussion as part of a student's formative assessment.
- A research essay that particularly assess the depth of understanding.
- A capstone dissertation provides students with an opportunity to display most, if not all, the programme level learning outcomes for knowledge and understanding.

Skills

Student skills are assessed by a combination of these assessment elements:

- Written submissions in advance of seminars as part of a student's formative assessment.
- Research essays that particularly assess the depth of understanding.
- A capstone dissertation provides students with an opportunity to display most, if not all, the programme level learning outcomes for knowledge and understanding.

Student Support and Guidance

Each student is allocated a Personal Tutor who can assist with academic advice and support with personal issues. The College also has a Disability Officer for those who have a disability, specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia or long-term medical condition which may impact their studies.

Quality Management Arrangements

This programme is subject to ongoing monitoring and enhancement through the College's normal processes of module, programme, and periodic review. These exercises include engagement with external expertise, current students, and alumni.