



This review method
is ESG-compliant

Annual Monitoring for Educational Oversight

Union Theological College,
Belfast

May 2025

Annual Monitoring: desk-based analysis of Union Theological College, Belfast, May 2025

Outcome of the desk-based analysis

1 From the annual return and documentary evidence, the monitoring team concludes that the Union Theological College, Belfast (the College) is making **commendable** progress on the implementation of its action plan.

Monitoring summary

2 The College works effectively with its awarding bodies to maintain academic standards. The BA (Hons) Theology is validated by St Mary's University, Twickenham (SMU). The first cohort of this programme is due to graduate in July 2025. The Level 7 and Level 8 postgraduate programmes are awarded through The Presbyterian Theological Faculty, Ireland (PTFI). The MA in Theology is taught by the Bible Mesh Institute (BMI) under a Memorandum of Agreement; the degree is awarded through PTFI. There have been no material changes since the May 2024 desk-based analysis. Student numbers remain constant with an increase in enrolments to the BA (Hons) Theology programme. Average retention is 95% with some postgraduate programmes achieving 100%. Retention rates are similar for all modes of study.

3 The recommendations from the 2023 Higher Education, Alternative Providers Review have been further enhanced in the 2024 Annual Monitoring Review. All actions have been completed with detailed supporting evidence. The College has further developed and enhanced its practice with evidence of continuing development recorded in the 2025 Annual Return.

4 Items of good practice have been progressed. External expertise has been enhanced through further training for external examiners, which has included the creation of a new external examiners' handbook, referencing the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Research-informed teaching has been supported through hosting an MA Colloquium, two PhD symposia and an international convention, as well as providing research training and further postgraduate seminars. The Research Committee has developed a strategy to monitor and review strategic partnerships, the strategy being embedded into the Code of Practice for PhD degrees and the Partnership Principles and Procedure. Disability Policy and Procedure has been updated through consultation with external expertise and is now supported by a new Disability Support Sub-Committee through a specified schedule of work.

5 Affirmations have been progressed. A new CPD handbook has been developed, with CPD now being monitored by the Education Committee. Faculty are encouraged to take up external examining roles, publish and attend conferences. Student engagement has been enhanced through the creation of the General Student Council, which has enhanced terms of reference. Student survey data shows good levels of student engagement with feedback processes.

6 The recommendation to provide full and accurate information to students for making complaints has been progressed. 2023-24 student survey data indicated that 80% of students are aware of the complaints procedure. The College programme and module development and review policy requires modules to be reviewed after they have been taught

and programmes to be reviewed on an annual basis. The Academic Administration Timetable 2024-2025 identifies the quality assurance processes and Faculty and other committee meetings which reflect the activities on the timetable. The College is evaluating the Teaching and Learning Strategy for 2020-2025 before drafting its strategy for 2025-2030 (due to go live in September 2025).

7 The College has furthered its engagement with the wider higher education community through its partnership with awarding HEIs and through increased research activities. These include hosting a research conference with presentations by staff and students and involving students from academic partners. Student engagement has been enhanced through their involvement in research activities and through increased engagement with feedback and surveys. The General Student Council meets regularly and reports to the College Education Committee. Student feedback indicates generally high levels of satisfaction with students now more aware of the activities of their representatives.

8 The College reviewed its Committee Structure in Spring 2024. From this review the Faculty agreed to create the Internal Examination Board (IEB) to replace the work of the departmental boards and ensure consistency across departments and programmes. Following student and staff feedback, the College developed and implemented a Resource Policy for spring 2025. This policy ensures that undergraduate and postgraduate taught students can access the correct learning resources in a timely and consistent manner. The policy is embedded in the Academic Administration Timetable.

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Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel 01452 557000

Web www.qaa.ac.uk

