

Maryvale Institute



Higher Institute of Religious Sciences

**Ecclesiastical Licence in
Divinity: Pathway in
Catechetical Sciences
Programme**

validated by

*The Ecclesiastical Theology Faculty of The Ecole
Cathédrale, Paris*

Welcome to the Maryvale Higher Institute of Religious Sciences (HIRS)

In this information pack we will outline exactly what you can expect from our Licence in Divinity: Pathway in Catechetical Sciences programme.

- A Licence Degree Recognised by the Holy See
- Over 40 Years of Teaching Experience
- Validated by Faculté Notre Dame de Paris –Approved by the British Accreditation Council.
- A Unique Blend of Distance Learning and Residentials at Oscott seminary
- A Wide Range of Highly Regarded Academic Lecturers
- A Place Where Faith and Academic Excellence Meet
- A Community of Learning and Love, aged between 18 and 80

Our validators and students tell us that the unique blend of part-time, distance and residential learning is of the highest academic quality. It offers the possibility of gaining a theology qualification recognised by the Holy See while at the same time continuing your daily life.

This degree offers you the opportunity to learn about your Faith in great depth and offers a passport into working for the Church at parish or diocesan level, in catechesis, as a chaplain, for religious orders or Faith-based organisations and charities as well as in schools. Uniquely, our Licence in Divinity is recognised by the Holy See, therefore is valid in Britain and worldwide.

In the pages that follow you will learn a little about our origins, our deep commitment to St John Henry Newman's vision on learning, the structure of our programme, the way it is delivered, and the wide range of staff involved in teaching.

If you have any questions or simply want to have a chat about our programme and how it would fit into your life, Rev Dr Richard Ayivi Aziati, our Programme Director, is always happy to have a Zoom or Teams call. He can be reached via email:

richard.aziati.maryvale@oscott.org

If you wish to apply, please contact the Programme Administrator, Viktoria Meszaros via email:

undergrad@maryvale.ac.uk OR Viktoria.Meszaros.Maryvale@oscott.org

Maryvale Higher Institute of Religious Sciences St Mary's college, Oscott, Chester Road,
Sutton Coldfield, B73 5AA

What Our Graduating Students said:

'The material covered on the course, its delivery in such a prayerful setting and the professionalism of the instructors was awesome. ... Each module was like a chapter of the most exciting book I had ever started.'

'The overall quality of the Maryvale Course has been wonderful for me. The Coursebooks have presented a clear presentation of the faith which is comprehensive and orthodox.'

'Distance learning has been very beneficial and Maryvale has facilitated it very well.'

'The last five years have been a journey that, looking back, has had its ups and downs, its smooth and rocky patches but one that has shaped my outlook on life and deepened my faith. I can't imagine my life before I started this course and it has inspired me to proceed further.'



What Our Validators said:

'As usual, there was a very good cooperation spirit between our team and our Maryvale colleagues, including the examiners sitting for the first time on juries.'

'The quality of student's work matched what is expected for a Baccalaureate degree in religious science. Presentations and answers to the questions ranged from fair to excellent.'

'Student performance demonstrates a very good quality of teaching and learning. Students are capable of clearly presenting the knowledge acquired, oriented towards true pastoral care.'

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Our Aim:

The Maryvale Higher Institute of Religious Sciences was born at Maryvale House in Birmingham. This was Saint John Henry Newman's first home as a Catholic, and although like him we have moved from the house, he remains our main inspiration. This is what he said:

What I desiderate in Catholics is the gift of bringing out what their religion is. I want a laity ... who know their religion, who enter into it, who know just where they stand, who know what they hold and what they do not, who know their creed so well that they can give an account of it, who know so much of history that they can defend it.

I want an intelligent, well-instructed laity. I wish you to enlarge your knowledge, to cultivate your reason, to get an insight into the relation of truth to truth, to learn to view things as they are, to understand how faith and reason stand to each other, what are the bases and principles of Catholicism I have no apprehension you will be the worse Catholics for familiarity with these subjects, ...

You ought to be able to bring out what you feel and what you mean, as well as to feel and mean it; to expose to the comprehension of others the fictions and fallacies of your opponents; to explain the charges brought against the Church, to the satisfaction, not, indeed, of bigots, but of men of sense, of whatever cast of opinion.



The Present Position of Catholics in England, 1851.

When, in 1851, St John Henry Newman spoke of having a laity 'who know their religion, who enter into it, who know just where they stand, who know what they hold and what they do not', in essence, a 'well-instructed laity', who would 'enlarge' their 'knowledge', 'cultivate' their 'reason' and 'get an insight into the relation of truth to truth, to learn to view things as they are, to understand how faith and reason stand to each other' and the 'basis and principles of Catholicism', he was making a brave new statement. At that time formation in theology and philosophy were largely in the realm of the Church and reserved for priests and religious. Over 100 years later, in 1980, when Maryvale International Catholic Institute, under the auspices of the Archdiocese of Birmingham, opened its doors to adult students, this bold vision of Newman's underpinned the education provided – it does to this day.

Maryvale Institute St Mary's college, Oscott

The Maryvale Higher Institute of Religious Sciences has its historical and spiritual roots in Maryvale House, Old Oscott, Birmingham. Maryvale House became a centre for religious education in the Archdiocese of Birmingham under the direction of Archbishop George Patrick Dwyer from 1980 onwards. Having served as the base for the Institute for more than four decades, the old house was deemed no longer fit for purpose. Other changes had come too, more particularly the internet, which had transformed the possibilities of distance learning. Since 2024, Maryvale Higher Institute of Religious Sciences has been working closely with the Birmingham Archdiocesan Seminary, St Mary's College, Oscott. Based on a stunning campus only a few miles from Maryvale House, Oscott College was developed to replace Maryvale House as a seminary in 1838. From September 2025 the HIRS became an intricate part of St Mary's College Oscott, while retaining its autonomy. The buildings were designed by famed architects, Augustine Pugin and Joseph Potter, and include what is commonly agreed to be one of the outstanding jewels of Catholic Second Spring Architecture, namely the College chapel. The seminary is set in extensive parkland. Maryvale students have full access to the wonderfully rich Oscott Glancey's Library, both to its physical and electronic resources.

The Maryvale Community

Maryvale HIRS students have their residentials at Oscott College, where they have an opportunity to meet teaching staff in person and spend time together as students.

Our residentials are punctuated by daily Mass, elements of the Liturgy of the Hours, communal meals and social time. Creating community has always been an important aspect of the Maryvale mission.

Our students come from countries ranging from Hong Kong and the Philippines to the Gulf, from Anglophone Africa, from across Europe and from the Americas and build lasting relationships. This continues after graduation, as they join our very large alumni association. We believe that studying at Maryvale HIRS is more than study: it is a pilgrimage of Faith of brothers and sisters in Christ from across the world.

The Maryvale HIRS Staff

Permanent Faculty and Support Staff

Revd Dr Richard Ayivi Aziati. Licence Programme Director

Revd Dr Michael Cullinan BDivinity Programme Director

Revd Dr Harry Schnitker Admissions Tutor & HIRS Director. Also lecturer at St Mary's University, London.

Rt Revd Bishop David Evans Representative of the Moderator & Lecturer.

Revd Dr Robert Letellier Lecturer. Also, at the University of Cambridge.

Revd Dr Martin Onuoha Lecturer.

Miss Rosie Doody Academic Registrar.

Mrs Viktoria Meszaros HIRS Administrator.

Mr Sean Carron Library Manager.

Mrs Jackie Hall Finance Manager.

Associate Lecturers

Fr Partick Akekpe

Dr Catherine Bedwei-Majdoub University of Northampton. Brentwood Diocese. DSG, St Mary's University, London.

Revd Matthew Bernard-Qureshi

Mrs Joanna Bogle

Dr Ausra Cane

Dr Tracy Cattell

Dr Keith Robert Chappell University of Birmingham; Honorary Fellow, Edward Cadbury Centre.

Revd Dr Richard Conrad O.P.

Dr Angela Costley

Revd John Deehan

Fr Nathaniel Dreyer I.V.E., Fides et Ratio Institute, Fossanova Abbey, Italy.

Dr Tamra Fromm

Revd Dr Paul Hayward Archdiocese of Birmingham.

Sr Hyacinthe Defos Du Rau O.P. Dominican Sisters of St Joseph.

Dr Catherine Knowles St Mary's University, London.

Revd Uwe Michael Lang Cong. Orat., St Mary's University, London; Allan Hall. Seminary; Liturgical Institute, Mundelein, Illinois.

Dr Mary McCaughey St Mary's College, Oscott.

Sr Prof. Mary Mills

Dr Liam McDonnell Blackfriars Hall, University of Oxford. Emeritus Professor, Liverpool Hope University. External lecturer St Mary's College, Oscott.

Dr Christina Pal, Lux in Tenebris Associate Staff, Oscott College.

Dr Jeremy Pilch St Mary's University, London.

Miss Patricia Ridge

Dr Daniel Schneider

Miss Zoe McCann

Miss Mariella Catania

Fr Ryan Service Archdiocese of Birmingham. Franciscan University, Steubenville. Archdiocese of Birmingham.

Revd Robert Taylerson Archdiocese of Birmingham.

Dr Helen Watt Blackfriars Hall, University of Oxford.

Dr Christopher Wojtulewicz Dean of Philosophy, St Mary's College, Oscott.

Faculté Notre Dame de Paris

Based in the heart of the French capital, Paris, sits the Collège des Bernardins, the stunning architectural home to our validating partners, the Faculté Notre Dame de Paris (FND).

Maryvale Higher Institute of Religious Sciences is extremely proud of its association with this leading seat of learning in the Catholic Church. Founded by Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger in 1984, it is a revival of what was the premier seat of learning in the Middle Ages since the time of Charlemagne. Its degrees, *baccalauréat en théologie*, *licencié de théologie* and *docteur en théologie*, are recognised by the Holy See. FND is constituted in accordance with Pope Francis's apostolic constitution, *Veritatis gaudium*, and is under the umbrella of the École Cathédrale, part of the Archdiocese of Paris. Like Maryvale, FND teaches clergy, religious and laity.

Please visit FND's website for more information:

www.collegedesbernardins.fr/la-faculte-notre-dame



Licence in Divinity: Catechetical Sciences

This Licence is a postgraduate ecclesiastical degree, distinct from a Licentiate in Sacred Theology (STL). It is awarded through Maryvale's Higher Institute of Religious Sciences (HIRS) and validated by the theology faculty of the École Cathédrale de Paris on behalf of the Congregation for Catholic Education in Rome.

The Licence degree is intended for lay religious and clergy in leadership positions, for example in diocesan catechetics or adult faith formation, or those involved in the new evangelisation. However, it is especially suitable for lay people working in the Church, as it is a qualification awarded by the Holy See, distinct from an STL, with a particular orientation towards pastoral theology, catechetics and religious education.

Maryvale has the only such institute in Britain – and indeed in the English speaking world – approved by the Catholic Church to award bachelors and licence degrees in divinity.

Maryvale HIRS works according to the Bologna Code by which educational credits gained at BA and Masters levels can be counted according to the European Credit Tariff (ECTS).

The programmes at Maryvale thus provide graduate and postgraduate qualifications for practicing lay Catholics, lay religious and clergy in their service of parish and diocese, which have Church recognition.

The Licence Programme is especially suited to:

- those in diocesan positions of catechetics or adult faith formation
- those involved in the creation, or oversight, of catechetical resources
- those involved in work related to the new evangelisation
- those in Catholic chaplaincy or Catholic school leadership positions.

Admission Requirements:

Admission to the Licence programme is available for all those who have the Ecclesiastical B. Divinity, or an equivalent qualification (see Section 2.5, Admission requirements, for more details).

Structure and content

To gain the Licence, students first complete eight postgraduate modules, which are normally taught over 24 months. This consists of:

YEAR ONE

Module One:	Catechesis: Purpose, Nature, Method
Module Two:	God and Salvation in Jesus Christ

Module Three:	Christian Anthropology
Module Four:	Scripture for RE and Catechesis

YEAR TWO

Module Five:	The Church
Module Six:	Liturgy and Sacraments
Module Seven:	Moral Formation
Module Eight:	Research Methods

YEAR THREE

During this final year students finish a dissertation and take three specialist modules in which they study:

A *classic text* in the area of catechetics

A *key figure* in the area of catechetics

A *contemporary debate* in catechetics.

A *dissertation* in the area of RE and Catechesis (20,000 words).

The dissertation is then assessed in the form of an oral examination.

Teaching and Learning Strategy

Collaborative Learning is followed on the course, with course materials specially prepared by the HIRS's team of academic, educational and pastoral specialists. Students follow the course at home through the material, readings and assignments presented to them in the coursebooks corresponding to each module of study.

Teaching Periods: The course includes a core teaching component of three weekends per annum. Of these, two are delivered online, and one is in person. For the academic year 2026-27 the first virtual study weekend is planned for September. The online study weekends are also planned for January and May 2027.

Those who cannot attend for appropriate reasons, including but not limited to disability and caring responsibilities, will need to provide adequate notice and evidence to the Programme Team. Reasonable accommodations will be made so that those with these exemptions are not adversely affected by missing the valuable teaching provided at these teaching periods.

Teaching periods also constitute invaluable opportunities for students to meet and discuss with each other, to socialise, worship and study together. During teaching periods, all students receive lectures and seminars from experts in the field which focus on particular modules being studied.

Programme Director

The role of the Programme Director is to guide students through the course and to monitor both their progress with their studies and the effect of the course on them. He or she monitors all the students' assessed work. He or she also acts as a tutor and operates an email/Zoom helpline for all the students of the course. One-to-one tutorial and evaluation discussions are held at all teaching periods. Students are encouraged to contact the Programme Director with any questions or problems concerning the course.

Academic Tutors

An Academic Tutor is assigned to each student for each area of study. This tutor provides support and direction through a response to the academic paper produced by the student at the conclusion of a module.

Study at home

Students are expected to devote approximately 15–20 hours per week studying. There are two months of vacation each year. Students can obtain advice and help about study techniques and methods and good time-management skills at the teaching periods, from the Licence office at Maryvale, and from designated programme staff, especially during the first year.

Other Resources

- Students are provided with lists of additional recommended books and articles. These may be purchased or borrowed from libraries.
- Students have access to library facilities at Oscott Seminary and the University Library of St Mary's University, Twickenham, for reference purposes. The Librarian is available to offer advice and guidance, for example in searching for local theological libraries. Students also have access to the large library of our validating partners, Faculté Notre Dame. Student cards are provided to identify students wishing to use other libraries.
- Advice from the Librarian can also be given to students on relevant academic internet sites, and audio-visual resources.
- There are regular online seminars and lectures to which all students have access.

Assessment

Each module in the Licence year is assessed through a written assignment of 5,000 words. The final piece of work undertaken for the Licence is an oral defence of the Licence dissertation. The guideline length for this is 300–500 words or 5-10 PowerPoint presentation slides with comments of 500–700 words (excluding references). The summary of the oral

presentation of the Licence dissertation should be written and submitted two weeks prior to the date of the oral defence.

For the Licence, the student also completes a modern language requirement (through attending language seminars online during the required teaching periods, if needed).

Coursework and dissertations are assessed initially by academic tutors, moderated by the Programme Director and all assessed work, including all the dissertations, and scrutinised by an external examiner. All reports and marks are made available to the Board of Examiners, which is responsible for taking the final decision on all cases.

Annual programme cycle for students

The following chart summarises the learning cycle process.

The HIRS has three terms, punctuated by a teaching period and residentials.

Michaelmas Term-	14 September to 11 December 2026
Lent Term-	11 January to 19 March 2027
Easter Term-	12 April to 9 July 2027
Teaching periods:	
Michaelmas Term (Online)	18-20 September 2026
Lent Term (Online)	15-17 January 2027
	14-16 May 2027

In addition, all students can join students on the BDivinity programme at an in-person study day at Oscott if they wish on 26 June 2027

6. Admission to the Programme

In addition to conforming to the general admissions requirements of the HIRS, for admission to the Licence Programme, candidates will need to have studied Catholic theology in the following areas at first honours or second degree level:

- History of Philosophy,
- Metaphysics,
- Epistemology,
- Anthropology
- Holy Scripture,
- Fundamental Theology,
- Dogmatic Theology,
- Moral Theology,
- Spiritual Theology,
- Liturgical and Sacramental Theology,
- Patrology and Church History,
- Canon Law.

Students should arrange for transcripts of previous relevant studies to be sent to the HIRS. Provided the student has sufficient relevant studies that mirror our modules for years one and two, they can start year three.

Students who wish to join the Licence Programme and do not satisfy all of the requirements for admission can undertake an agreed number of bridging modules. These will be determined by the Admissions Committee following submission of an application.

Apart from these academic qualifications, candidates are asked to submit in writing their reasons for wishing to undertake the Licence. The intention is to ensure that candidates have an understanding of the contribution that higher studies might make to their professional life, and an acceptable attitude regarding the demands, spiritual, intellectual and personal, that the course could be expected to make on them.

Policy on the admission and support of students with English as a second language

All higher education programmes offered by Maryvale HIRS are written, delivered and assessed exclusively in English. On application the HIRS requires evidence of proficiency in written and spoken English; the evidence of proficiency required for entry into courses is as follows:

- International English Language Testing System (IELTS): Minimum average of 6.5 overall,

with no sub-test below 6.0.

- Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (MTELP): Minimum equated score of 90.
- Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL): Minimum paper-based total of 550, computer-based total of 213, or Internet-based total of 79.
- Cambridge Certificate in Advanced English (CAE): Minimum grade of B.
- Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE): Minimum grade of C.

Students who cannot demonstrate proficiency in English to the satisfaction of the HIRS are required to take a short written examination which tests reading level and understanding, and facility in written English. This is designed, provided and assessed by the HIRS. Dictionaries are allowed for the purposes of the exam.

As a standard procedure, all students for whom English is not their first language are identified at the relevant Assessment and Examinations Board.

Students who are deemed not to have passed may retake the exam, having demonstrated that they have undergone further instruction in English. Students who demonstrate a minimal level of proficiency may be accepted onto the course at the discretion of the HIRS provided they give clear evidence of their plans for further improving their English.

Application and registration

An application form is available on request from the Programme Administrator (undergrad@maryvale.ac.uk), or may be downloaded from the **Licence in Catechetics page** of HIRS website. A non-returnable application fee of £60.00 is required when making an application for the course. Full fees for the Licence year are required once you have been registered for the course, and must be paid **before** the first weekend of the course.

Course fees

The cost per annum for the Licence for 2026-27 is presently £4,700.

Payments can be made in instalments. This can be done quarterly or monthly.

There is also a £60 registration fee upon application.

The course fees are non-refundable 14 days from the date of your acceptance letter. The fee includes tuition, examinations registration and office administration, the resources for the Library and other facilities provided.

There will be separate fees for board and lodgings for the annual residential. The HIRS aims to keep these costs to an acceptable level.

While the HIRS endeavours to keep the course fees at a reasonable level, it cannot guarantee that fees will remain the same throughout the duration of the programme. The HIRS reserves the right to amend its course fees at any time to reflect inflation and any other financial changes which may impact on the efficient and economic running of the Institute.

Payment Methods: Payments can be made with Debit or Credit cards. This incurs a 3% bank charge. Alternatively, we accept cheques. You can also pay by making an electronic bank transfer. These are usually free of charge.

Please Note: *Students attending residentials are expected to ensure that they have adequate health insurance cover before visiting. The HIRS cannot accept responsibility for students' personal health, all students are expected to take reasonable precautions to safeguard their own health and safety.*

Visas: *The HIRS does not assist students who require an entry visa for the UK with the application process. As our courses are not on campus, our students do not require a student visa to enrol, but may need a tourist visa to attend our residentials.*

Grants

Fees charged do not represent the actual cost of running the degree programme. No government grants are available to Maryvale HIRS. Maryvale is funded by its Course fees, any projects undertaken and by a grant from the Archdiocese of Birmingham and from any projects or courses it offers. The HIRS will support applications of students to any source of grants. Students would be well advised to investigate the possibility of obtaining grants from other educational sources. In addition, local dioceses, deaneries and parishes may well be prepared to fund part of a student's fees, especially if the degree programme is seen as training for a more effective catechetical and pastoral work in the church. The HIRS will also support applications of students who propose to make such arrangements with their local church which may give help with fees to students in return for vocational service either rendered in the present or promised in the future.

Admissions process

When you have sent back your application form, an application fee to cover the administrative costs associated with the admissions process, a statement of why you would like to take this course, and once the references and transcripts which you will have arranged to have sent to us have arrived, your application will be considered by the Licence Admissions Committee. (Note: These references are treated as confidential between the referee and the HIRS).

Following the meeting of the Admissions Committee, assuming that your application is successful, you will be sent a letter of acceptance no later than four weeks from the receipt of

your completed application (including supporting documents e.g. references). Your Acceptance Pack will contain further information about Maryvale HIRS and the Licence Programme, including details of how to apply for a student card, followed by an invoice for your fees in due course. Once we have received your fees for the Licence year, you are then formally enrolled as a student of the HIRS.

If for any reason your application for a place on the course is not successful, the HIRS reserves the right, because of the elements of confidentiality involved in the admissions process and the collection of references, not to give you the reasons for this decision. If at any stage you are dissatisfied with the admissions process we would advise you to follow the complaints procedure of the HIRS: a copy of this can be found on the HIRS's website under '**Study with us – Regulations and Policies**', or you can order a copy from the Librarian. We will endeavour to ensure that your questions are dealt with promptly and professionally.

Programme Management

(a) Maryvale HIRS Council

(b) The L.Div Degree is provided by Maryvale HIRS, which is affiliated to the Faculté Notre Dame de Paris (FND), in accordance with the Norms for such institutes issued by the Dicastery for Culture and Education, which approved its Statutes.

(c) The Council of the HIRS, presided over by the Director of the HIRS, oversees all the undertakings of the HIRS. It is also responsible for the oversight of the content, delivery and standards of the ecclesiastical degree programmes. Membership of the Council includes the President of FND or his delegate, the Director of the HIRS, the permanent faculty of the HIRS, two representatives of the non-permanent staff of the HIRS, two student representatives, the Academic Registrar or Assistant Registrar, and any co-opted person or persons.

(d) The Programme Board

(e) Maryvale HIRS has a Programme Board which oversees the running and development of the Programme. The Board is drawn from the Faculty of the Programme and includes student representatives.

(f) The Programme Board reports to the Maryvale HIRS Council, which has also established a number of other committees for the effective delivery of the various degree and other

(g) programmes – especially the Academic Standards Committee. There is also an Examinations Board. The Director and Staff of the Programme

The Director and Staff of the Programme

The HIRS Director is appointed by the Archbishop of Paris with the prior approval of the Archbishop of Birmingham and FND. The HIRS Faculty is appointed by the Archbishop of Birmingham. The appointment of permanent faculty requires the approval of FND.

The Programme Director, Rev Dr Richard Ayivi Aziati, is responsible for establishing and developing all aspects of the Programme. The Academic Administrator is Mrs Viktoria Meszaros. There is a large Associate Staff comprising Academic Tutors, Lecturers, Examiners, Moderators and Advisers.

Regulations and Complaints

(h) The HIRS Regulations and the Complaints policy and procedures can be found on the Maryvale website www.maryvale.ac.uk Regulations and Complaints