

Maryvale Higher Institute of Religious Sciences



Ecclesiastical Bachelor of Divinity Student Handbook

2025–2026

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Introduction

Dear Student,

Maryvale Higher Institute of Religious Sciences (HIRS) extends a very warm welcome to you as a student of the Higher Institute of Religious Sciences. We hope you will be very happy studying at Maryvale.

Handbooks are specially written to give you essential information about the conduct of the Higher Education programmes offered by the Institute and the content of the programmes you are undertaking. You will find this book provides you with the answers you require concerning assignments, examinations, residentials, and much more.

This handbook is intended to be read in conjunction with the HIRS Regulations and the Study Guide which now contains all information on Libraries.

Revd Dr Michael Cullinan

Director, Bachelor of Divinity Programme

Part 1: General HIRS Information

Our History

On 25 March 2011, the Solemnity of the Annunciation, Maryvale Institute was erected by the Holy See as a *Higher Institute of Religious Sciences* (HIRS) according to the Norms laid down for such institutes by the Congregation for Catholic Education in Rome. This allowed the establishment of the **Ecclesiastical Bachelor of Divinity** and the **Licence in Divinity (Catechetical Sciences)** Programmes recognised by the Church. Since then, the HIRS has been reconfigured as an entity within Maryvale with its own Statutes and Director, and these new Statutes were approved by the Congregation on 29 September 2016.

The HIRS is governed by a Council consisting of the permanent faculty and representatives of the Faculté Notre Dame, the non-permanent faculty, and the students. The representative of the Archbishop of Birmingham is Bishop David Evans.

The Council has enacted Regulations, approved by Faculté Notre Dame, to provide for the management of the Programmes through a Faculty Board consisting of the permanent faculty and others co-opted as necessary.

Our Mission Statement

The Mission of Maryvale HIRS is to be a leader in the provision of lifelong learning and research opportunities for all in Catholic Theology, Catechesis, Philosophy and other allied subjects, in order to serve Christ's mandate and His Church's mission of Evangelisation in contemporary society. This provision is a distinctive combination of the methodology of supported distance learning and engagement with the Word of God in Scripture and Tradition guided by the Church's Magisterium. This work is carried out within an environment of Christian Faith, academic and administrative quality, open dialogue and the mutual valuing of the work and gifts, and the personal and professional development, of every member of the HIRS.

Our Vision

The vision for Maryvale HIRS is to be a diocesan, national and international supported distance-learning college which

- Lives and presents the Catholic faith and morality to all those concerned with contemporary religious, moral and ethical issues
- Provides a range of formation programmes at all levels for those in the Church and for those offering themselves for service in the Church as catechists, permanent deacons, lay pastoral assistants and volunteers, as well as responding to future needs and challenges. It does so by providing degree level qualifications recognised by the Holy See
- Assists all who wish to deepen their Catholic faith through study
- Researches and publishes in the area of Catholic studies, serving the academic and Church communities with its work

- Takes a self-critical stance as an academic community in monitoring and evaluating its own programmes and methods, in the light of evidence gathered internally and that provided by external agencies, to ensure the highest possible standards and relevance of its academic activities
- Develops its teaching programmes and other activities according to the findings of ongoing evaluation procedures and in response to evolving needs in the wider community
- Develops collaborative partnerships with dioceses and centres of Catholic theological education in the UK and elsewhere, and extends its links to other bodies in a spirit of ecumenism and service to the community

This Year

After a very successful recruitment to the BDiv programme last year, we once again have been blessed by a large new cohort starting Year One. All students will benefit this year from our new status as owned by the Trustees of St Mary's College, Oscott. We are separate from Oscott Seminary, but share ICT and library provisions.

Our in-person study days will take place at Oscott. The first of these will be a special welcome day for our first-year students, to introduce them to our programme and to provide an opportunity for them to meet both staff and each other.

Term Dates

- Michaelmas Term: 15 September to 18 December
- Lent Term: 8 January to 27 March
- Easter Term: 20 April to 17 July

Residential Dates

Year One:

- 26-27 September: Online
- 18 October: in-person at Oscott Seminary, Birmingham
- 30-31 January: Online
- 27 June: in-person at Oscott Seminary, Birmingham

Years Two, Three and Four:

- 26-27 September: Online
- 30-31 January: Online
- 27 June: in-person at Oscott Seminary, Birmingham

Year Five

- 19-20 September: Online
- 30-31 January: Online
- 27 June: in-person at Oscott Seminary, Birmingham (not compulsory)

Oral Exams 29-30 June: in-person at Oscott Seminary, Birmingham

SMILE (Canvas)

SMILE(Canvas) is a Virtual learning environment used by our Institute to host online course content and activities. You can access lecture recordings, reading lists and online resources; you can submit assignments and review feedback; the in-built calendar includes the dates for your online sessions and deadlines to help you keep on track, etc.

Smile also has the great advantage of allowing students to contact each other easily, without disclosing personal address details.

Academic Advice

The Institute has been in the field of catechesis since 1980 and award-bearing higher education programmes since 1990. It is important for the future of the HIRS that programmes maintain their quality and that they are seen to produce a high standard of work. It is hoped that the following suggestions for students will provide useful guidance to this end:

- a. Make the best possible use of academic advice
- b. Investigate and use local library resources
- c. Keep to deadlines for the submission of written work
- d. Seek advice about or inform Programme Director of any problems with the administration of the programmes or the handling of assignments
- e. Give top priority to attending residential sessions
- f. Contribute to programmes evaluation activities
- g. Aim at a high standard of editing and presentation of written work
- h. Abide by the assessment regulations for your programmes
- i. Respect the broad personal and spiritual purposes of Maryvale as well as your programmes more specific academic aims.

Management, Monitoring, and Evaluation of Programmes of Higher Education

Maryvale HIRS is part of the Oscott Trust and its financial and personnel matters are co-ordinated with the Trustees.

The B.Div. Programme is provided by the Maryvale Higher Institute of Religious Sciences (HIRS) as a canonical institution erected by the Holy See through the Dicastery for Education and Culture and affiliated to the Ecclesiastical Theology Faculty Notre Dame of Ecole Cathédrale, Paris (FND). Maryvale HIRS is governed by Statutes approved by the Dicastery for Education and Culture. These Statutes provide for a Director and a Council on which there must be student representatives.

Responsibility for the academic quality of the Institute's programmes lies with the HIRS Council, then with FND, and ultimately with the Holy See and its Quality

Assurance Agency *Ave Pro*. Maryvale is also accredited by the British Accreditation Council.

An External Examiner makes judgements concerning the overall quality and standards of the programmes in comparison with other institutions of higher education. An Examination Board meets to approve all the marks awarded.

The day-to-day running of individual programmes is the responsibility of the Programme Director, Revd Dr Michael Cullinan. There are normally two meetings each year of the Programme Board (which includes student representatives) to review and monitor the programmes and to support the Programme Director.

Maryvale HIRS strongly values student representation on its boards and committees. Student representatives are chosen from each year of each pathway.

Staff and students are asked to participate in the review and evaluation of all elements of programme provision and are encouraged to advise the Programme Director in formal and informal ways as to how the programme might be improved to meet their and subsequent students' needs. This is a vital part of the HIRS's overall monitoring of its programmes and is invaluable in programme planning and development. As a result of evaluations from staff and students, continual improvements are made to programmes each year.

Teaching periods always include an evaluation of the lectures, seminars and wider aspects of the programmes – such as tutorial guidance and support, communication with students and so on. The results of students' evaluations are brought to the Programme Committee for discussion and feature in the annual report made to the validating body.

HIRS Officers, Faculty and Staff currently active on B.Div.

N.B. These lists are accurate at the time of going to press.

External

Chancellor of FND	H.E. Mgr Laurent Ulrich, Archbishop of Paris
Moderator of the HIRS	M. Revd Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham
President of FND	Canon Jean-Baptiste Arnaud
Delegate of the President	Prof. Frédérique Poulet
External Examiner (Years 1–4)	Dr Sarah Boss
External Examiner (Year 5)	Prof. Frédérique Poulet

Permanent Faculty

HIRS Director and Licence Programme Director:	Dr Birute Briliute
BDiv Director	Revd Dr Michael Cullinan
Lecturer in Philosophy	Rt Revd David Evans
Lecturer in Scripture	Revd Dr Robert Letellier

Lecturer in Dogma	Revd Dr Martin Onuoha
Admissions Tutor	Revd Dr Harry Schnitker
<i>Active Non-Permanent Faculty of the HIRS (This information is correct at going to press)</i>	
Fr Patrick Akekpe	Tutor
Revd Dr Richard Aziati	Lecturer, Tutor
Ms Catherine Bedwei-Majdoub	Tutor, Lecturer
Revd Matthew Bernard-Qureshi	Lecturer in Liturgy and Sacraments.
Mrs Joanna Bogle, DSG	Lecturer in Apologetics.
Dr Tony Brown	Tutor
Dr Ausra Cane	Tutor, Lecturer, Examiner
Dr Tracy Cattell	Lecturer in Empirical Research; Learning Support
Dr Keith Robert Chappell	Moderator
Revd Dr Richard Conrad OP	Tutor, Lecturer, Examiner
Dr Angela Costley	Examiner
Revd John Deehan	Examiner
Sr Hyacinthe Defos Du Rau	Lecturer
Dr Tamra Fromm	Lecturer in Theology, Doctrine and Catechesis
Revd Dr Paul Hayward	Lecturer in Canon Law.
Mrs Kathleen Hodgson	Tutor
Dr Joshua Madden	Lecturer
Revd Uwe Michael Lang C.O.	Lecturer in Liturgy.
Dr Mary McCaughey	Lecturer in Dogma.
Dr Liam McDonnell	Lecturer
Prof Mary Mills	Lecturer
Dr Agata Mleczko	Tutor and Adviser
Dr John Murray	Lecturer
Dr Christina Pal	Lecturer
Prof. Francesco Pesce	Tutor
Dr Jeremy Pilch	Lecturer in Ecclesiology
Miss Patricia Ridge	Tutor
Dr Daniel Schneider	Lecturer in Biblical Catechesis.
Revd Ryan Service	Lecturer in Special Morals
Revd Dr Robert Taylerson	Lecturer in Spiritual Theology.

Revd Peter Traynor	Tutor, Scottish Diaconal Prog
Dr Helen Watt	Lecturer in Special Moral Theology
Dr Christopher Wojtulewicz	Lecturer in Philosophy and Anthropology

Student Advisers

Julie Macamhlaoibh
 Dr Agata Mleczko
 Ms Anne Moriarty
 Dr Jacqueline Wilkinson

Administrative Staff

Miss Rosie Doody	Registrar
Mrs Viktoria Meszaros	Senior Programmes Administrator.
Mrs Jackie Hall	Finance Manager
Mr Paul Meller	Librarian
Mr Sean Carron	Library Assistant and IT support.
Dr Tony Brown	Website Manager
Mr James Wigley	IT

HIRS Regulations

All students are provided with a copy of the Regulations at the beginning of their programme and receive any appropriate updates each subsequent year.

Students contract under the regulations in force at the time of their original registration. Students will be consulted about changes in the regulations. The Institute reserves the right to change regulations without the necessity of unanimity within the student body. However, students do have the right to terminate their contract with Maryvale HIRS if any such changes do take place.

Financial Services

At the present time all of the Maryvale programmes are funded from the students' own resources. The Institute's primary policy is that the Course Fees, for each individual academic year, are paid at the start of that year, in full. The Institute appreciates that, in the current period, many students may have been affected financially and find paying their fees in full difficult. Any student finding themselves having difficulties with payment should contact the Finance Manager, to discuss

options for staged payments. All course fees must be paid in full before the end of the final residential in April of the academic year.

The Institute is able to accept payment by the following means:

- by cheque (payable to 'Maryvale Institute') sent with a copy of your invoice and addressed to the 'Finance Manager' at Maryvale Institute, Maryvale Higher Institute of Religious Sciences, St Mary's College Oscott CIO Oscott College, Chester Road, Sutton Coldfield, B73 5AA.
- by credit/debit card – in which case, please contact the Finance Office (financemanager@maryvale.ac.uk) to make the necessary arrangements or use the Institute's website (links at bottom of the course fees page) where you can select the correct fee and make payments directly
- electronically direct to Maryvale's Bank Account. In this case, please contact the Finance Manager to ask for the relevant details. In addition to the Course Fees, Bank charges of £10.00 need to be added to payments made from bank accounts from outside the UK.

Student Welfare and Support Services

Careers

For career concerns you may consult with your Programme Director.

Support for students with disabilities

Maryvale HIRS is committed to a policy of equal access for disabled students and will make provision wherever possible for students to be able to follow its programmes. The HIRS is currently reviewing this provision following the guidelines and requirements of the government's Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). The Institute Accessibility Co-ordinator is Miss Rosie Doody.

(registry@maryvale.ac.uk).

Pastoral Support for Students

As a Catholic Institute, Maryvale HIRS is committed to the spiritual and personal welfare of its students. Pastoral care can be sought from the Programme Director, Fr Michael Cullinan or from the Admissions Tutor, Deacon Harry Schnitker.

Other Advice

For advice outside the confines of Maryvale Institute

National Union of Students
Nelson Mandela House
461 Holloway Road
London N7 6LJ

email: nusuk@nus.org.uk

text phone: 020 7561 6577

tel: 020 7272 8900

www.nusonline.co.uk.

National Postgraduate Committee

John McIntyre Building

University Avenue

University of Glasgow

Glasgow

G12 8QQ

Telephone: 0141 330 5074

Email: npc@npc.org.uk

<http://www.npc.org.uk/>

Part 2: Programme Details

Background and Introduction to the Programme

Maryvale has been responsible for programmes in Catholic theology since it began in 1980, with growing numbers of students each year. This period has seen expanding demands for formation of lay people and religious through a comprehensive and systematic programme of theological study.

The Bachelor of Divinity programme is characterised by a holistic approach which encourages students to draw together the personal, spiritual, intellectual and educational dimensions of their lives into a coherent focus. It aims to develop areas of subject knowledge, and intellectual skills as well as to contribute to students' own personal development. The opportunities for personal, moral, spiritual, social and cultural development which this programme provides are necessary not only for the Church community which this programme directly addresses, but also for responsible citizenship in our communities.

This is a five-year, part-time, supported distance-learning, modular programme leading to a Bachelor of Divinity degree. There are two pathways, the first a traditionally organized theology programme which is the successor of the Maynooth B.A. (Divinity) Degree Programme, now incorporating some formation in catechesis and apologetics and the second, which is the successor of the OU B.A. in Applied Theology, oriented to formation for diaconal ministry. There is also a shortened form of Pathway 'M' – called Pathway 'O' – for graduates of the Oscott Diaconal Formation Programme.

This degree meets the requirements of the Bologna Convention by which there is co-recognition of undergraduate degrees across EU countries.

The central features of the programme are:

- a part-time, supported distance-learning programme over 5 years
- a framework of supporting study units
- academic study integrated with an emphasis on formation in the faith
- online teaching periods

Factual page

Institutions responsible for the Programme of Study

Maryvale Higher Institute of Religious Sciences, Birmingham: (Teaching Institution)

Theology Faculty, Notre Dame de Paris, Ecole Cathédrale, Paris: (Awarding Institution)

Programme Director: Revd Dr Michael Cullinan

Name of Programme award(s) to be conferred: Bachelor of Divinity and Bachelor of Divinity (Ecclesial service)

As an exit award after two years: Maryvale Certificate of credit – equivalent to a UK national CERT HE

As an exit award after four years: Maryvale Diploma of credit – equivalent to a UK national DIP HE

Subject Benchmark Statement(s): Theology and Religious Studies

Date programme is to continue from: September 2016

Duration of Programme and mode of study: 5 years part-time, supported distance learning study

Credit value and notional learning time for the Programme:

Credit value: 360 UK credits; 180 ECTS – 3,600 notional learning hours

ECTS = European Credit Transfer System.

Staff contacts & availability

The Director of the Programme, Revd Dr Michael Cullinan can be contacted by email bdivdirector@maryvale.ac.uk or by letter to the Maryvale address.

Administrative support on the programme is provided by the Academic Administrator Mrs Viktoria Meszaros email undergrad@maryvale.ac.uk.

Student advisers' contact details will be given later. Viktoria will always forward emails to them.

Spiritual Development

Many students opt to study for the Bachelor in Divinity degree for practical reasons: the degree enhances their effectiveness at work, creates job opportunities or allows them to progress in their careers. However, studying theology, while creating such opportunities, is first and foremost a question of Faith. Studying theology at this level allows the student to delve deeply into the foundation blocks of Catholic teaching and to enhance their understanding of this teaching. It also allows them to grow in their own spiritual life.

Opportunities for students after completion of the programme

The degree creates many opportunities, particularly within the Catholic Church and Ecumenical initiatives. Besides the normal career opportunities which such higher qualifications offer, our qualifications equip graduates for voluntary and professional work in theology, and in Church-related positions, including in the newly-established ministry of Catechist, in chaplaincy and in Catholic education. This ecclesiastical award of B. Divinity is only now being offered in the English-speaking world, and successful completion of this award also satisfies the admission requirements for the Licence in Divinity.

Aims of the Programme

- Growth in wisdom and understanding through systematic and comprehensive study of the science of theology and, in particular, the study of the Sacred Scriptures, Magisterial documents, and the works of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church.
- Helping to discover and realise, through in-depth study and reflection on the Catholic faith, each person's vocation in the Church, whether as a lay person, a cleric or a religious.
- Development of skills to be able to communicate and to share the faith by increasing knowledge and understanding.
- Nourishment for one's spiritual life through reading and working with others of a similar faith commitment.
- For some religious communities, to provide, upon request, a programme of theological studies for religious life and preparation for the priesthood – the Maryvale B. Div. programme being combined with these communities' own in-house tuition and formation.

Contact and Study Hours

Study for this programme requires around 15 hours of study per week for work in the certificate years and up to 20 hours per week for work in the remainder of the programme. This includes study/contact through engagement with module Programme books; with lecturers at residentials, contact with your academic tutor; and contact with Maryvale staff.

Programme Specific Regulations

N.B. These Regulations are to be read in conjunction with the HIRS Regulations.

Entry and progression requirements

The admission of a student to any award within this programme follows the general policy of the HIRS for the admission of students and the HIRS Statutes which provide for an Admissions Committee.

In general, entry to this degree programme is 'open' in the sense that no specific previous qualifications are needed but evidence will be sought of ability for degree level work and the application will need to be supported by appropriate references. The Programme is delivered in English and evidence of competence in the language may be required of those for whom English is not their mother tongue.

Normally only students who have successfully completed all elements in any year of a programme are eligible to progress to the following year.

Credit rating for advanced standing or exemption

This programme follows the general policy of the Institute with regard to credit rating and the granting of advanced standing.

Minimum and maximum time allowances for completion

1. A student who enters the programme has an entitlement that the programme will be offered for its normal full term, of five years. In the case of the HIRS ceasing to offer the degree within this five-year period, every attempt will be made by the Institute to offer an alternative arrangement to enable students to complete their studies.
2. By special arrangement students are permitted to complete the programme in a shorter time than normal
3. The maximum time for completion of the programme is normally eight years.
4. If a student takes longer to complete the programme than its normal length of time (5 years) the HIRS does not guarantee that the programme offered to the student will be the same as that initially started by that student.
5. A student who successfully exits the programme with an intermediary award (or not) can re-enter the programme within a three-year period. After this period students may be required to retake elements from their previous programme of studies. This is subject to the programme still being offered. The HIRS does not guarantee that the programme of study when re-started will be the same as that initially started by that student.
6. A student who does not complete the programme within the eight-year registration period may request, as appropriate, a transcript of credits achieved.
7. Students may be permitted to intercalate or granted a study break. These are not entitlements but are at the Faculty Board's discretion. A student who intercalates can restart his studies at the beginning of the next academic year, subject to the programme still being offered.

8. Under normal circumstances requests for intercalation or for a study break must be submitted in writing and approved by the Faculty Board.

INTERCALATION is where a student is admitted to a year of study on a programme and for any reason does not submit the complete programme work for the year or sit the examination (if relevant) and has not advised the HIRS of his or her intention to withdraw, but intends to complete that year's work over the next or subsequent year(s).

STUDY-BREAK is where a student admitted to a programme of study, on completion of that year of study, advises the HIRS in writing **before the commencement of the following year's study**, that he or she intends to take a study break of one or more years. There is no charge for the study-break year(s) and permission for such breaks is normally granted automatically. Once a year of study has commenced, a study-break is not normally an option until the year has been completed; the rules relating to intercalation are applied unless the Faculty Board and HIRS Director provide otherwise because of exceptional circumstances.

1. A student who is intercalating is charged an intercalating fee, which is set by the HIRS, for each and every year the intercalating continues. Intercalating ceases when either all the work relating to that year has been completed or the student advises the Institute that he or she has withdrawn entirely from the programme of study within the regulations of the programme.
2. Intercalation and study breaks count as part of the eight-year maximum time limit, i.e. the total time taken in study, intercalation and study breaks must not normally exceed eight years.

Attendance at Classes

In common with all Higher Education providers, some amount of personal attendance at teaching is required. The interactive classes with specialist lecturers are a key part of Maryvale HIRS's teaching method and provide the crucial opportunity of direct access to the teachers that distinguishes the BDiv from a purely online programme. It is embarrassing when an invited lecturer discovers that only a small number of students have bothered to attend. It has therefore been decided to penalise unreasonable absence much in the way that late assignments are.

Students are therefore expected to attend all live classes, tutorials and in-person events which form part of the course. Exemption from this requirement may be granted by the Programme Director, normally only for

1. Illness
2. Family emergencies
3. Unforeseen work commitments

The Programme Director must where possible be asked to grant an exemption at least one day before the class.

Non-attendance without exemption will normally incur up to a 5–10-percentage-point deduction in the mark for the relevant module at the discretion of the Faculty Board.

In the case of in-person classes, students who would find the required travelling very difficult may be exempted from all such attendance at admission. They will still be required to join the residential virtually and the above regulations apply to exemption from this requirement

Late and Long Assignments

The importance of meeting deadlines for submitting assignments cannot be overemphasised. The discipline of doing so is an essential part of all academic programmes, and is a particularly important aspect of distance-learning degree programmes, because the effort to meet deadlines assists the student in developing regular patterns of study. It must also be said that once a student begins to miss deadlines and falls behind with work, it becomes increasingly difficult to do justice to the programme; assignments are inevitably rushed and produced in a hurried fashion in the attempt to make up for lost time.

Once one assignment is late, the next tends to be as well, and it is difficult to return to a steady pattern of study. Moreover, the learning which takes place on the degree programme is sequential and this feature is lost if a student is trying to write two assignments more or less simultaneously in an attempt to catch up with work. A student who takes longer time for an assignment without good reason could also be considered to have had an unfair advantage over those who observed the deadline. Furthermore, the system of electronic submission of essays makes accommodating late work administratively onerous.

For these reasons, and also to ensure the smooth running and administration of the programme, it is important that there are clear guidelines concerning assignment deadlines.

1. Students must do their utmost to submit all their work by the assignment deadlines.
2. A student may for a good reason request the Programme Director to grant an extension of up to two weeks. The request must be made **before** the essay deadline has passed unless there is a good reason for the delay. If the assignment is not ready for completion by the end of the extra time granted, a request for a further extension of up to one month may be made to the Programme Director, specifying the reason on the appropriate form. A further extension beyond this one can only be granted by the Faculty Board for a very serious reason.
3. Any extension of more than two-thirds of the time to the deadline for the next assignment shall not normally be granted without a revised timetable for that student's remaining essays being agreed.
4. Students are not expected to ask for more than one extension each year. Second and subsequent extensions may only be granted for substantial reasons
5. Work submitted late without permission being given shall incur the following penalties (or such others as shall be decided by the Faculty Board):

Up to one week late	lowest mark within the grade given
From over 1 to 3 weeks late	lowest mark 1 grade below that given

From over 3 to 5 weeks late lowest mark 2 grades below that given

Over 5 weeks late lowest mark 3 grades below that given

subject to a minimum of a bare pass.

6. Programme work shall not normally be accepted beyond the deadline set in any academic year. Permission to submit after the deadline may be given by the Faculty Board, for medical, compassionate, or other serious reasons, and may be given subject to a penalty as prescribed in paragraph 4 above. Work submitted without permission beyond this deadline, normally two weeks **before** the last examination, may be submitted to a resit board.

7. The Programme Director shall contact any student who fails to submit an assignment four weeks after the deadline to ascertain the reason. A student who fails to submit three consecutive assignments without explanation may be deemed to have withdrawn from the programme.

Excessive Length

In accordance with HIRS Regulations penalties may also be applied for assignments seriously exceeding the word limit.

Assessment

- Each module is examined by one or more assignments and, except as indicated below, all or part of an examination.
- Students must sit the annual examinations which may be timed tests or orals. Detailed regulations for these will be published in good time beforehand.
- Examination re-sits are normally in October. Students retaking exams may only be awarded a bare pass in that examination. If students fail a resit they may sit the exam a third time together with the exams of the following year.
- Where there are examinations and assignments in the same module or half-module, compensation between assignments and examinations is permitted subject to the following rules:.

Failure and Compensation

Compensation shall be applied when the following conditions are met:

- No more than 10 ECTS, or one quarter of the total credits, whichever is greater, can be compensated in any one stage (Cert. level or Dip. level) of an undergraduate or postgraduate programme.
- It can be demonstrated that the learning outcomes of the qualification level have been satisfied.
- A minimum mark of no more than 5 percentage points below the module pass mark has been achieved in the module to be compensated.
- Taking the module mark to be compensated into account, an aggregate mark of at least 40% has been achieved for the qualification level of the undergraduate.

- No compensation shall be permitted for any core project/dissertation module, as defined in the programme specification.
- A student who receives a compensated pass in a module shall be awarded the credit for the module. The original component mark(s) (i.e. below the pass mark) shall be retained in the record of marks and used in the calculation of the aggregate mark for the stage or qualification.
- Compensation between modules or half-modules in different subjects is not possible.
- Students receiving a fail grade without compensation for an assignment must resubmit the assignment. An assignment may not normally be resubmitted more than once. Students resubmitting an assignment may only achieve a bare pass for it.

Plagiarism

When plagiarism or the **unacknowledged** use of AI is found in an assignment, HIRS and Institutional rules and regulations apply. Please note that this also applies to self-plagiarism.

AI may be used to correct grammar and spelling, but not to create content (argumentation or evidence). Any use of AI must be clearly declared, specifying the program used. Further guidance will be found in the Study Guide.

The Programme Director ensures that the processes for monitoring, moderation and examining are in place.

- *Assignments and examinations* are marked by academic tutors or qualified markers and moderated by the Programme Director or persons appointed by him following Institute procedures.
- *Dissertations* are marked by academic supervisors and moderated by the Programme Director

The External Examiner sees all assessed work each year and reports annually to the Examination Board.

Final Oral Examination

In year 5 there is a final oral exam in two parts. In Part 1 students are asked to present their dissertation, followed by questions from the examination panel on the dissertation **and, possibly, on a related doctrinal theme if there is one**. In Part 2 students are asked to present one of the six doctrinal themes that they have prepared during the previous years, followed by questions from the examination panel.

The doctrinal theme to be presented is selected as follows. Students submit five doctrinal themes in order of preference before **1st June**. The Programme Director selects three of these, on different areas of theology and if possible including one related to the dissertation topic, by **two weeks** before the exam. The student prepares these three and is informed which of the themes to present in Part 2 **three days** before the exam.

Language Requirement

Some knowledge of a second modern language is required for all ecclesiastical degrees. In year 5 students without a foreign language qualification may satisfy this requirement by participating in a seminar on a selected text of a French or Spanish theologian in the original language.

Awards

Each year's work is given an overall grade following the relevant marking schemes. For the degree award the years are weighted as follows:

Year 1: 10%; Year 2: 10%; Year 3: 20%; Year 4: 30%; Year 5: 30%.

The classifications are:

BDiv(Hons)1st,	BDiv (Ecclesial Service) (Hons) 1st
BDiv(Hons) 2:1,	BDiv (Ecclesial Service) (Hons) 2:1
BDiv(Hons) 2:2,	BDiv (Ecclesial Service) (Hons) 2:2
BDiv(Hons) 3rd,	BDiv (Ecclesial Service) (Hons) 3rd
BDiv Pass.	BDiv (Ecclesial Service) Pass.

Marking Criteria

a) Essay and examination marking scheme

HONOURS (45% - 100%)

A-(70-74%) A (75-79%) A+(80%+) **First Class (Hons)**

Excellent understanding and penetration of wide reading, including core and recommended works, well used and integrated; clear critical awareness of the nature, sources and tools of the subject being studied; excellent knowledge and understanding of Catholic faith, liturgy and life with appreciation of their unity and integration; ability to link the subject being studied to other areas; skilful use of relevant argument; at the higher levels of this band, suitable for publication with excellence of argument, structure, clarity and presentation.

B (61- 64%) B+(65- 69%) **Upper Second Class (Hons)**

A very well organised answer, demonstrating that the material is thoroughly known and the subject comprehensively addressed, with analytical ability apparent; evidence of recommended and wider reading that is relevant and well used; evidence of a broad perspective as well as sound knowledge and understanding of the unity and integrity of belief and practice.

C+ (53-56%) B-(57-60%) **Lower Second Class (Hons)**

Core reading covered and used well; fair understanding of the subject, with expected elements present; directly addresses the question set; some argument present, which may be limited or diffuse; reasonable structure.

C-(45-48%) C (49-52%) **Third Class (Hons)**

Core reading covered; basic, accurate understanding of the subject, with main expected elements present; generally focused on the question set; work has some weaknesses: in focus on the topic, communication, structure, coherence, depth of argument or the inclusion of irrelevant material.

BORDERLINE PASS (40-44%)

D (40-44%)

This borderline pass grade applies when the question has been answered but contains only just sufficient knowledge and understanding; minimally sufficient material, synthesis, and/or reading; a vague focus on the topic or context, or a marked lack of clarity.

FAIL (0-39%)

This fail grade implies that the topic has not been dealt with at undergraduate level: the work demonstrates very little knowledge and understanding of the subject; serious errors in knowledge and understanding; does not answer the question; does not reach acceptable standard of English or articulation; minimal or no account taken of the Programme book, core reading and associated programme elements; excessive uncritical assertions. Up to 8 marks can be deducted for each of these failings.

b) for doctrinal themes

A-(70-74%) A(75-79%) A+(80%+) First Class (Hons)

Excellent understanding and explanation of a chosen doctrine, clearly expressed in the student's own words; excellent and extensive knowledge and understanding of the scriptural, patristic and magisterial sources of the doctrine; excellent analysis of the Trinitarian dimensions of the doctrine; excellent analysis of the Church's reasons for belief in the doctrine; comprehensive, excellent knowledge and understanding of the doctrine's links with Liturgy, Life in Christ and Prayer, expressed in their own words with reference to sources.

B (61- 64%) B+(65- 69%) Upper Second Class (Hons)

Good understanding and explanation of a chosen doctrine, clearly expressed in the student's own words; thorough knowledge and understanding of the scriptural, patristic and magisterial sources of the doctrine; good analysis of the Trinitarian dimensions of the doctrine; good analysis of the Church's reasons for belief in the doctrine; comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the doctrine's links with Liturgy, Life in Christ and Prayer, expressed in their own words with reference to sources.

C+(53-56%) B-(57-60%) Lower Second Class (Hons)

Fair understanding and explanation of a chosen doctrine, expressed in the student's own words; fair knowledge and understanding of the scriptural, patristic and magisterial sources of the doctrine; some analysis of the Trinitarian dimensions of the doctrine; some analysis of the Church's reasons for belief in the doctrine; fair knowledge and understanding of the doctrine's links with Liturgy, Life in Christ and Prayer, expressed in their own words with reference to sources.

C- (45-48%) C (49-52%) Third Class (Hons)

Basic understanding of a chosen doctrine, expressed in the student's own words; basic knowledge and understanding of the scriptural, patristic and magisterial sources of the doctrine; some awareness of the Trinitarian dimensions of the doctrine; basic understanding of the Church's reasons for belief in the doctrine; some knowledge and understanding of the doctrine's links with Liturgy, Life in Christ and Prayer, expressed in their own words with reference to sources. Work has some weaknesses: in focus on the topic, communication, structure, coherence, depth of argument or the inclusion of irrelevant material.

BORDERLINE PASS D (40-44%)

Minimal understanding of a chosen doctrine, expressed in the student's own words; some knowledge and understanding of the scriptural, patristic and magisterial sources of the doctrine; some awareness of the Trinitarian dimensions of the doctrine; some awareness of the Church's reasons for belief in the doctrine; little knowledge and understanding of the doctrine's links with Liturgy, Life in Christ and Prayer, expressed in their own words with reference to sources; a vague focus on the doctrine, or a marked lack of clarity.

FAIL E (0-39%)

This fail grade implies that the topic has not been dealt with at undergraduate level: the work demonstrates very little knowledge and understanding of the subject; serious errors in knowledge and understanding; does not answer the question; does not reach acceptable standard of English or articulation; minimal or no account taken of the Programme book, core reading and associated programme elements; excessive uncritical assertions. Up to 8 marks can be deducted for each of these failings.

c) for the research project and dissertation

HONOURS (45% - 100%)

A-(70-74%) A (75-79%) A+(80%+) **First Class (Hons)**

Excellent understanding and penetration of wide reading, including recommended works, well used and integrated; clear critical awareness of the nature, sources and tools of research; excellent knowledge and understanding of Catholic faith, liturgy and life with appreciation of their unity and integration; ability to link the subject being studied to other areas; skilful use of relevant argument; at the higher levels of this band, suitable for publication, with excellence of argument, structure, clarity and presentation.

B (61- 64%) B+(65- 69%) **Upper Second Class (Hons)**

A very well organised answer, demonstrating a secure understanding of research methodology, with the subject comprehensively addressed, with analytical ability apparent; evidence of recommended and wider reading that is relevant and well used; evidence of a broad perspective as well as sound knowledge and understanding of the unity and integrity of belief and practice.

C+ (53-56%) B-(57-60%) **Lower Second Class (Hons)**

Reading covered and used well; fair understanding of research and its methods, with expected elements present; directly addresses the question set; some argument present, which may be limited or diffuse; reasonable structure.

C- (45-48%) C (49-52%) **Third Class (Hons)**

Basic reading covered; basic, accurate understanding of the subject, with main expected elements present; generally focused on the question set; work has some weaknesses: in focus on the topic, communication, structure, coherence, depth of argument or the inclusion of irrelevant material.

BORDERLINE PASS (40-44%)

D (40-44%)

This borderline pass grade applies when the question has been answered but contains only just sufficient knowledge and understanding of research; minimally sufficient material, synthesis, and/or reading; a vague focus on the topic or context, or a marked lack of clarity.

FAIL (0-39%)

E (0-39%)

This fail grade implies that the topic has not been dealt with at undergraduate level: the work demonstrates very little knowledge and understanding of the subject; serious errors in knowledge and understanding; does not answer the question; does not reach acceptable standard of English or articulation; minimal or no account taken of the Programme book, core reading and associated programme elements; excessive uncritical assertions. Up to 8 marks can be deducted for each of these failings.

Teaching and Learning Strategy

The teaching and learning strategy adopted within the Maryvale HIRS degree programme derives from Open University distance-learning methodology. This has been adapted to the specific situation of Maryvale HIRS with the guidance of an adviser with Open University experience. The unique kind of distance learning of the Maryvale Institute HIRS is called the **supported distance-learning method**.

Many elements make up the complete supported distance-learning strategy, all of which help to enable students to use the system effectively. These include written Coursebooks and Readers, study guides and handbooks, Zoom and in-person teaching periods, introductions to staff, fellow students and Maryvale's facilities for supporting students at a distance such as the library services.

a) Programme Director

The Programme Director guides students through the programme and monitors their progress with their studies. He monitors all the students' assessed work, and act as a general tutor. Contact is normally by email, online, or phone. Tutorial sessions are available at all residential sessions. Students are encouraged to contact the Programme Director in the first instance with any academic questions or problems concerning the programme.

b) Academic Administrator

The Academic Administrator is responsible for the smooth running of the administration of the Programme including the keeping of records. Students are encouraged to contact her for all routine non-academic matters, but in order to avoid wasting time, **they are asked to refer to this Handbook first where appropriate.**

c) Academic Tutor

The Academic Tutor is responsible for marking the assignments and providing reports, a copy of which is retained by Maryvale and the original made available to the student concerned. The role of the Academic Tutor is both to assess the work and to provide substantial tutorial feedback on the assignments and advice on academic progress. The method of marking assignments, by detailed annotation, is specifically designed to be of maximum help to the student at a distance.

Academic Tutors must all have at least a Master's degree in Catholic theology and preferably a Licence, or the equivalent. They play a very important role in the assessment process and therefore receive regular support and training, especially in the supported distance-learning methods of tutorial style marking.

d) Student Advisers

General support, encouragement and/or advice concerning assignments or any other aspect of assessment, can be gained from Student Advisers who are recent graduates of the programme familiar with the trials as well as the joys of studying. The advisers normally attend the introductory weekend.

e) Coursebooks

The Coursebooks, prepared by specialist staff, are the teaching texts which provide the basis for the assignment work. Authors prepare texts in the specialised style that good distance learning requires in order to maximise the involvement of the student. This involves programme book authors pointing the students to specific texts to read, recognising what, in the reading, needs commentary or careful explanation and showing how students can consolidate and expand their learning through tasks and exercises. The programme books are written, therefore, not as learned monographs in which the author has the *subject* at the forefront of his mind but as self-contained teaching and learning manuals, in which the author keeps the *student* at the forefront of his mind.

All teaching materials will be provided through Canvas/SMILE. Printed copies will only be produced where there is a proven special need.

The Coursebooks are not books in the normal sense of the word: they are written lessons of a much larger and cohesive programme; they are learning aids, tutorials in print, guided ways into fields of knowledge. This means that each text:

- integrates references to essential and further books throughout each module
- includes a list of learning objectives at the beginning of each chapter
- links the programme books to each other in awareness of the outline of the whole programme
- contains a regularly updated bibliography
- provides relevant exercises to stimulate student research, reflection, imagination, etc.
- takes into consideration underlying themes to run through the entire programme, such as the person and message of Christ, the Trinity and the dignity of the human person
- uses a direct style that addresses the reader personally, encouragingly and supportively, not only as expert, but also as explorer, teacher and tutor in and throughout his text
- indicates key areas for assessment following the learning objectives of the programme.

Coursebooks, tutor advice and feedback, personal tutorial support, residentials, library and IT resources, the development of collaborative work between students and the support and encouragement of staff and fellow students, are all seen as linking elements of the supported distance-learning system and vital for its success.

f) Teaching Periods

There are three main teaching periods each year normally running from Friday evening to Saturday evening. Two of these teaching periods take place via Zoom, the third is an in-person study day or residential. The normal form of teaching at all three main teaching periods will comprise pre-recorded lectures to be watched before the 'residential' weekend, followed by interactive classes with the lecturer. There will also be social time and liturgy.

The **interactive classes** will be scheduled around the assignment deadlines. Some of these will be held at the main teaching periods but further ones will also be held at more convenient times, usually on weekday evenings. Dates and times of these will be circulated in advance.

These classes are not intended to be lectures but to give students the chance to ask questions to an expert in the subject. **It is therefore very important that *all* students have looked at the lectures and coursebook BEFORE the class.**

Maryvale has experienced the enormous encouragement that residential periods give to students on all its Higher Education programmes. On all HIRS programmes, the teaching periods enable students:

- to know and support each other and grow as a community,
- to come together in a joint venture and challenge,
- to have a spiritual background to their work through structured times of prayer throughout the weekend,
- to benefit from discussion periods with people in similar situations to themselves.

The teaching periods also benefit the student

- through supporting lectures and workshops enriching the programme book material,
- through tutorials and interaction with the Institute staff. Outside residential periods, tutorials can also be given by Zoom or Skype.
- through the resources, including the E-Library resources, of the Maryvale library, the library of Faculté Notre Dame, and ICT services.
- The purpose of the introductory teaching period is to familiarise students with Maryvale HIRS and its staff, to clarify the nature, organisation and administration of the programme, and to allow students to meet each other. The session is mainly concerned with ensuring that students understand how the learning system is intended to work, and what facilities are provided or are otherwise available. Students are also provided with this Handbook which clearly lays out all the necessary information.
- The teaching periods have an essential role in the intellectual development of the student. They enable the student to seek assistance from

the programme staff, lecturers or programme book writers, library staff, and other students. The lectures assist the student in understanding the aims, contents and contexts of the modules in the coming term.

- The teaching periods also have the complementary purposes of helping students develop a sense of the inter-relatedness of the modules and of the coherence of the whole programme, and at the same time stimulating their own self-awareness and personal development. Given the importance of the academic, vocational, and personal dimensions of these sessions, participation in them plays a vital part in the programme.
- The spiritual ethos on the teaching periods is important for the students even when they are online. Liturgy is built into every residential timetable.
- At each teaching period or whenever necessary students are given tutorial time so that general programme progress may be given particular attention.
- The final exam, in year 5, is an oral exam and there is, therefore, practice and instruction on making presentations and answering questions orally.

Typical Teaching Period Timetable

FRIDAY

- | | |
|---------|----------------------|
| 6.00pm | Introduction, class |
| 7.00 pm | Social time, Vespers |

SATURDAY

- | | |
|----------|----------------------|
| 9.00 am | Tutorials/Class |
| 10.30 am | Tutorials/Class |
| 12.00 pm | Tutorials/Class |
| 2.30 pm | Tutorials/Class |
| 4.30 pm | Tutorials/Class |
| 6.00 pm | Tutorials/Class |
| 7.00 pm | Social time, Vespers |

Normally each student will have about three classes and one individual tutorial.

Pathways

There are currently three Pathways: the Maryvale 'M' Pathway for new students, Pathway 'O' which is a shortened version of Pathway 'M' for graduates of the Oscott Permanent diaconal Formation programme, and the diaconal Pathway 'D' for those in formation for the permanent diaconate (this pathway is currently not receiving students).

Pathway 'M'

In this pathway, all the main areas of theology are studied over five years through a series of consecutive modules, concluding with a dissertation. Study commences with an introduction to theology and the first year includes philosophy and Church history, providing vital foundations for studying the faith. The second year of the programme focuses upon the study of Sacred Scripture and the Blessed Trinity – the sources of theology. Following this, further dogmatic areas of Christology, soteriology and so on, are studied, then the moral teaching of the Church and the sacramental and spiritual life of the Christian and an introduction to catechesis and apologetics. The final year involves a dissertation which concludes the whole degree programme and allows the student to select a specific topic for focus, while drawing around this a 'synoptic presentation' of the mysteries of the Faith.

YEAR	MODULES	ECTS
1: Foundational Studies	Faith and Revelation	7.5
	Church History	7.5
	Systematic Philosophy	7.5
	History of Philosophy	7.5
2: God in Salvation History	Introduction to the Scriptures & Old Testament I	7.5
	Old Testament II	7.5
	Intro to the New Testament	7.5
	Holy Trinity, One God	7.5
3: Salvation in Christ	Christology	10
	Paul and Acts of the Apostles	10
	Fundamental Moral Theology	10
	Creation, Fall, and Redemption	10
4: The Communication of Salvation	Ecclesiology and Mariology	10
	Grace and Glory	10
	Special Moral Theology	10
	Biblical Catechesis (<i>half module</i>)	5
	Canon Law (<i>half module</i>)	5
5: The Christian Life and Eschatology	Apologetics (<i>half module</i>)	5
	Sacraments	10
	Liturgy (<i>half module</i>)	5
	Spirituality Theology	10
	Dissertation and Oral Examination	15

Pathway M Assessment strategy

To assess the academic study effectively, three elements of assessment are used, the first 4 years following the same basic structure: one written **assignment** for each module, yearly written or oral **examinations** based on the work of the modules. The written assignment may be an essay or, in years 3–5 a doctrinal theme. In year 5 there are an optional seminar, a dissertation and the final oral exam. Students must submit at least one assignment in each module or half-module. The following table shows how each year is assessed:

Year	
1	4 modules 6 essays 80% 2 exams 20%
	4 modules 6 essays 80% 2 exams 20%
3	4 modules 4 essays 60% 2 doctrinal Themes 20% 2 exams 20%
4	3 modules and 2 half-modules 3 essays 45% 1 canon law assignment 15% 2 doctrinal themes 20% 4 exams 20%
5	1 module and 3 half-modules 2 doctrinal themes 20% 1 essay 15% 1 seminar presentation 15% Dissertation 30% Oral Exam 20%

a) Essays

Essays are basic in the process of supported distance learning and self-teaching and are the primary written means of demonstrating the students' knowledge and understanding. Through the essay the student also develops the ability to research a particular subject and to investigate arguments and implications concerning it.

The essays develop, and also provide a point of assessment of, the students' theological knowledge and understanding, including their ability to explore theological ideas with an appreciation of the historical and intellectual contexts within which the concepts were framed and developed. They also develop the ability to see relationships within what they have learnt, and the position of the subjects being studied in their wider context.

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| In year 1 | - all the essays are 2500 words |
| In year 2 | - all the essays are 3000 words |
| In years 3-5 | - all the assignments each year are 3500 words each |

b) Doctrinal themes

In each of the years 3-5 the student writes one or more doctrinal themes, explaining the evidence for a specific doctrine within the scope of the modules of the year, including:

- The key doctrines to be taught, linked to the hierarchy of truths
- The foundations in Scripture (OT and NT)
- The explanations in Tradition: key magisterial documents and patristic texts
- The implications in Tradition: Liturgy, Life in Christ and Prayer
- Contemporary debates and typical questions

In year 4 students may also make an oral presentation of a doctrinal theme including answering questions.

c) Seminar presentation

In year 5 each student must give one class presentation for credit.

d) Exams Years 1-4

In years 1-4 students must sit an annual written or oral examination on the modules taken. The canon law exam in Year 4 is oral.

e) Dissertation

In year 5, students undertake a piece of academic scholarly research of 8-10,000 words. This project draws together student learning and demonstrates the students' honours standard.

Pathway O

Pathway 'O' is an abbreviated version of Pathway M designed to allow those who have studied many of its modules before in their academic formation for the permanent diaconate. It allows them to receive the B.Div in two years. The detailed regulations are as for Pathway 'M', except that there are no exams before the final oral.

Plan of Studies

Year 1

Old Testament (essay/exegesis)	10%	7.5 ECTS
New Testament (essay/exegesis)	10%	7.5 ECTS
History of Philosophy (essay)	30%	7.5 ECTS
Philosophy (essay)	30%	7.5 ECTS
Mariology (doctrinal theme)	20%	5 ECTS

Year 2

Doctrinal themes in:

Grace	12%	5 ECTS
Creation-Fall-Redemption	12%	10 ECTS
Trinity	12%	5 ECTS
Elective to make up any deficiencies	14%	5 ECTS
Dissertation	30%	15 ECTS
Oral	20%	

The weighting for the degree is: Year 1 40%, Year 2 60%.