

Programme Specification

Foundation Degree Practical Theology

<i>School:</i>	Humanities
<i>Subject area:</i>	Theology and Religious Studies
<i>Entry from academic year:</i>	2024-25
<i>in the month of:</i>	September
<i>Awarding institution:</i>	York St John University
<i>Teaching institution:</i>	Congregational Institute for Practical Theology
<i>Delivery location:</i>	Congregational Federation Offices, Nottingham
<i>Programme accredited by:</i>	Not applicable
<i>Exit awards:</i>	Certificate of Higher Education Practical Theology
<i>UCAS code / GTTR / other:</i>	
<i>Joint Honours combinations:</i>	Not applicable
<i>QAA subject benchmark statement(s):</i>	Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark
<i>Mode of study:</i>	Undergraduate periods of study for part-time ¹
<i>Language of study:</i>	English
<i>Paired with foundation year</i>	No
<i>Study abroad opportunities:</i>	No
<i>Placement year opportunity:</i>	No

Introduction and special features

Our Foundation Degree (FD) Practical Theology is designed to provide you with an understanding of what it means to be a Christian in a Congregational setting in our time. It is designed to provide you with learning opportunities to enable you to integrate knowledge, experience and skills in a range of ministerial and community service contexts. This will help to prepare you as a reflective practitioner, equipped with a broader understanding of what ministry means in your context.

The Congregational Federation (CF) is committed to celebrating and championing diversity in our churches and to fostering an inclusive attitude and practice in all that we say and do. This is fully reflected and expressed in our ministerial training programme, and therefore in preparing for life and ministry with the CF you will be engaging with resources from a wide range of perspectives. We consider this essential for an authentic life and witness in society. Our resources and teaching bring insights, values and perspectives from scholars and practitioners who represent the global church with respect to our diversity of ethnicity, culture, gender, sexuality, ability and disability, age and tradition.

We believe that each perspective represents an equally authentic voice in the global church. We are one body of Christ, and we cannot know God and flourish apart from one another.

Practical Theology is theology as action as well as study. Therefore, we introduce you to the value of tools such as the Pastoral Cycle and Action Research models of learning and growth, which you will learn to use during the programme. We are well aware that there have been major changes in Western societies, making the UK genuinely multicultural, with both a plurality of religious communities and a community of secular humanists, and with a growing postmodern approach to knowing truth and exercising authority. Churches have to be prepared to live and witness in this social and cultural context, and we keep this in mind in all modules on the programme.

¹ The standard period of study will apply unless otherwise stated.

You will study biblical, theological and ethical subjects alongside discipleship, worship, local and global mission, and church development. You will have the opportunity to learn in a wide variety of contexts of Christian ministry and service, including pastoral ministry, spiritual enabling, chaplaincy and pioneering ministry. You will receive a comprehensive handbook for each module which will guide you through your reading and research and help to prepare you for the assignments.

It is taught part time and requires that you attend only four teaching weekends per year (September, January, April and June), all of these taking place at the Congregational Centre in Nottingham. For this reason, the full programme takes a minimum of four years (see below under Learning and Teaching). However, it is possible to be eligible for module exemptions if the criteria for previous learning are met (see below under Admissions Criteria). At the weekends you will take part in teaching sessions, times of worship and of relaxation with fellow students and tutors, and you will have a meeting with your Personal Tutor.

The periods between the weekends will involve supported learning and independent study. We have a good library at the Congregational Centre to which you have open access, and it has a broad range of module-related resources as well as wider and deeper reading. You will also be provided with a list of relevant libraries throughout the UK, with details of their availability. You will have 24/7 access to online resources through CONGLE, our Virtual Learning Environment, and you will be invited to online tutorials and seminars.

Your Personal Tutor, the module tutors, and the Director of Studies will keep in regular touch with you in between teaching weekends. We are interested in you as a person as well as a student, and we will always be here to support you in whatever ways are possible. Each cohort of students chooses one to become their student representative on the programme, and we take this very seriously. The student representatives are also members of the Course Board and the Management Board. We value this relationship highly, and so we respond positively and quickly to observations and suggestions.

All our tutors are, or have very recently been, practitioners in different forms of ministry, and this informs all our teaching. The modules are integrated, so that learning through study and practical experience interact. You will have the opportunity to work with local church and community projects in work-related modules throughout the course. In each case where you are involved in local church or community projects, you will have the support of a local mentor and of a support group, and you will be invited to suggest who might be appropriate for these roles.

If you are aiming for accredited ministry in the CF, you must complete the FD in order to be received onto the CF Roll of Ministries. However, the course is designed to support you in your Christian development whether or not you are seeking such accreditation. There is also support from tutors to help you discern and test your vocation, if that would be helpful, but there is no expectation that you will be working towards one of the accredited ministries. You are very welcome indeed if you wish to take the programme simply to enrich and deepen your faith and your understanding of Scripture and practical theology.

As well as knowledge, understanding and skills in a variety of ministries, we aim to equip you with skills in communication, both oral and in writing, including the use of communications technology; with the ability to integrate personal reflection with experience, using a number of reflective tools; and with the ability to engage with others, enabling them to gain and develop understanding, skills and confidence.

This programme will enable you to become a more biblically and theologically informed, practically skilled, and reflective practitioner who is able to engage effectively with both theory and practice, study and service.

Here are a couple of genuinely representative quotes from current students:

'I feel invigorated and encouraged on my study journey as a result of attending this study weekend! Thank you'.

'This is an excellent academic course. Very high standard and inspiring with a lot to learn. I highly recommend it to anyone who wants to study theology'.

From the beginning of this programme our External Examiners have commended us for enabling students to interact with the Congregational communities of faith they are being equipped to minister within, for requiring them to broaden their horizons in lived ministry experience, and for equipping them with the perspectives and skills to reflect theologically on ministry practice.

Admissions criteria

You must meet the minimum entry requirements which are published on the [Admissions webpage](#).

All students on the FD programme are required to hold either a current enhanced Disclosure and Barring (DBS / CRBS) certificate, or, in Scotland, a Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) certificate.

If your first language is not English, you may need to take an IELTS test or an equivalent qualification accepted by the University (see <https://www.yorks.ac.uk/international/how-to-apply/english-language-requirements/>).

If you do not hold sufficient formal qualifications, you can achieve admission through the CF's [GIFT Programme](#), which acts as an access course, or you may enroll on the first Level 4 module of the programme, and upon successful completion of the module, go on to enroll for the full programme, transferring the 20 credits.

If you do not have traditional qualifications, you may be eligible for entry on the basis of [Recognition of Prior Learning](#).

You can apply for the FD Practical Theology directly through the [CF website](#) or by contacting the CF offices. Applications are dealt with by the Congregational Institute for Practical Theology (CIPT).

Members of CF churches and those working for a CF Area or the National office are admitted to the course at reduced cost. If you qualify for reduced cost, you will need to include the church endorsement form, which you will find alongside the application form on the application website mentioned above.

The programme requires students to be able to access and use a computer or equivalent device to complete enrolment processes, access the virtual learning environment for programme and module documentation and learning resources, submit assignments, and engage in on-line interactive module activity. We recommend that you practise your basic computer knowledge, including word processing, using emails and using the internet.

Programme aims

1. To equip you with knowledge and understanding of the Christian Scripture in the context of current scholarship that represents the diversity of the global church with respect to ethnicity, culture, gender, sexuality and diverse abilities, and within a framework of theological reflection and contextual analysis, using a variety of models, in the practice of Christian discipleship and service.
2. To offer specific, vocation-based opportunities to develop knowledge, understanding and skills for a variety of Christian service and leadership roles, including (but not confined to) pastoral ministry, spiritual enabling, chaplaincy and pioneering ministry.
3. To enable you to gain a deep and practical knowledge of the Congregational tradition in the overall context of Church traditions and wider faith communities.

Programme learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of the programme you will be able to:

Level 4

Knowledge and understanding

- 4.1 Outline the breadth of understanding and application of key concepts in Christian theology and ethics, biblical studies, and the Congregational way of being church and its relation to diverse contextual Christian traditions in history and in the present day.
- 4.2 Outline key concepts in Christian discipleship and mission in local and global contexts.

Intellectual and cognitive skills

- 4.3 Relate biblical and theological knowledge to personal and church community life and ministry.
- 4.4 Demonstrate basic skills in gathering and organising information, especially primary resources, and using evidence appropriately to support conclusions.

Professional skills and other attributes

- 4.5 Demonstrate effective skills in presentations to a variety of audiences, including the creative use of oral, print and electronic media.

Level 5

Knowledge and understanding

5.1 Critically engage with and responsibly use a variety of diverse contextual models of biblical, theological and missiological analysis and practice.

5.2 Critically reflect on Congregational traditions in the diverse contexts of the wider Church and faith communities.

Intellectual and cognitive skills

5.3 Integrate reflection on personal experience of discipleship with wider issues such as mission, justice, diversity and inclusion, and the environment.

5.4 Demonstrate the ability to undertake further skills development and research, and to identify and benefit from personal support by accessing and applying appropriate resources.

Professional skills and other attributes

5.5 Demonstrate the ability to enable others to learn and develop their skills for Christian service in the community.

Programme structure

Code	Level	Semester	Year	Title	Credits	Module status	
						Compulsory (C) or Optional (O)	Non-compensatable (NC) or Compensatable (X)
VCF4003M ^B	4	1	Even (A)	The Bible: Jesus and the Prophets	20	C	X
VCF4004M ^T	4	1&2	Even (A)	Practical Theology in Contemporary Contexts	20	C	X
VCF4006M ^E	4	2	Both (A&B)	Christian Ethics	10	C	X
You must choose one from VCF4005M, VCF4007M or VCF4008M							
VCF4015M ^T	4	2	Even (A)	Contemporary Practiced Religion	10	O ²	X
VCF4007M ^T	4	2	Even (A)	Pastoral Care	10	O ²	X
VCF4008M ^M	4	2	Even (A)	Conflict, Resolution and Reconciliation	10	O ²	X
VCF4009M ^B	4	1	Odd (B)	The Bible: Jesus and the People of God	20	C	X
VCF4010M ^{C, T}	4	1&2	Odd (B)	History of Christian Life and Thought	20	C	X
VCF4002M ^{W, C}	4	1&2	Both (A&B)	Exploring Christian Service	10	C	X
You must choose either VCF4013M or VCF4014M							
VCF4013M ^T	4	2	Odd (B)	"To Be A Pilgrim"	10	O ¹	X
VCF4014M ^T	4	2	Odd (B)	Dancing with Elephants: Preparing to Preach	10	O ¹	X
VCF5007M ^M	5	1&2	Even (A)	Multicultural Ministry	10	C	X
VCF5001M ^{W, C}	5	1&2	Even (B)	Christian Leadership and Service	20	C	X

VCF5015M ^E	5	2	Even (A)	Ethical Case Studies	10	C	X
VCF5017M ^B	5	1	Even (A)	The Bible: Law and Letters	10	C	X
You must choose one from VCF5005M, VCF5006M or VCF5008M (or VCF5012M (by negotiation))							
VCF5005M ^B	5	2	Even (A)	The Word and the Words	10	O ³	X
VCF5006M ^M	5	2	Even (A)	The Learning Church	10	O ³	X
VCF5008M ^C	5	2	Even (A)	Living Congregationally	10	O ³	X
VCF5014M ^M	5	1&2	Odd (B)	Contextual Mission	20	C	X
VCF5010M ^C	5	1&2	Odd (B)	Congregational History and Principles	20	C	X
VCF5018M ^T	5	1&2	Odd (B)	Theological Dialogues	10	C	X
You must choose one from VCF5016M, VCF5013M, VCF5020M or VCF5021M (or VCF5012M (by negotiation))							
VCF5016M ^T	5	2	Odd (B)	Research Methods	10	O ⁴	X
VCF5013M ^M	5	2	Odd (B)	Pioneering and Fresh Expressions of Church	10	O ⁴	X
VCF5020M ^B	5	2	Odd (B)	Sing to the Lord a new Song! Psalms and Prayers in the life of the church	10	O ⁴	X
VCF5021M ^T	5	2	Odd (B)	Thinking Theologically	10	O ⁴	X
VCF5012M ^{B, T, C, M}	5	2	Both (A&B)	Negotiated Study	10	O ⁴	X

Regarding the optional modules (marked as O in the table), there are four sets. They are marked in the table as O¹, O², O³ and O⁴. In each case, students will choose ONE module from each set.

Regarding the superscript letters after the module codes, they represent the following broad categories.

B	Biblical Studies
T	Theology
E	Ethics
C	Church History/Congregationalism
W	Work-related
M	Mission

Any modules that must be passed for progression or award are indicated in the table above as Non-compensatable (NC). A Non-compensatable module is one that must be passed at the relevant level (with a mark of 40% or more) in order to progress.

Because we run the course on a part-time basis, with students taking 60 academic credits per year, not every module is offered every year. The references to 'odd' and 'even' in the Year column denote the alternate entry years of the course. If you are a 2023 entrant, you will study the 'odd' (B) modules in your first and third years and the 'even' (A) modules in your second and fourth years.

Learning, teaching and assessment

Learning and Teaching

Our students start with a range of abilities and previous experience, and we encourage you to continue on your own journey to become an increasingly confident and independent learner through your time on the programme.

The FD is studied part-time, taking four years to complete the two-year equivalent as a full-time student on a Foundation Degree programme. It is designed as a half time programme to work alongside your existing commitments, whether family, employment or significant church involvement, so that you can combine your study with these other areas of your life, keeping disruption to a minimum. This has the further advantage that you will be able to draw on your ongoing experience in your study, and your reflections on what you are learning will feed directly into your Christian discipleship and service.

The programme is provided within the context of a faith-based learning community, and it is designed to provide you with as constructive a context as possible as you work towards the programme outcomes. You will be well and enthusiastically supported by the Director of Studies, the tutors and the programme administrator, and you will realise the benefit of a low tutor-student ratio and consequent strong tutorial support.

Extensive use is made of our virtual learning environment, giving you to 24/7 access to a wide variety of resources, links to relevant, reliable websites, pre-recorded video clips, academic study guides and discussion forums.

Work-based learning is a key aspect of the programme, and the modules which involve placement-based experience and learning will play a central role in your overall learning experience. Work-based learning takes place in many different locations, as you, the student, choose. Recent placements have included church ministry, developing new expressions of church, working alongside chaplains in hospitals and workplaces, experiences with foodbanks, with Street Pastors and in community hubs exploring mission opportunities in a particular locality. These placements will also introduce you to the value of working with a mentor and a support group, emphasising the value of having this kind of continuing support and discipline in ministry contexts.

Assessment

Assessment is seen as assessment *for* learning rather than simply assessment *of* learning. We learn much more when we apply ourselves to something particular, applying the growing overall knowledge and skills that we are gaining to specific issues. It is an integral part of the learning process. Your work is assessed in a variety of ways, in keeping with the nature of the programme, and in order to enable you to delve more deeply into particular aspects of the subjects being explored and investigated in each module. Different types of assessment are designed to enable you to demonstrate a range of knowledge, skills and abilities.

In each module there will be a formative assignment, not counting towards your mark for the module, in which you will prepare something designed to be formative, helping you to develop essential learning skills, and as preparation for the marked summative assessment(s). These formative assignments vary from module to module, as appropriate, including self-reflective tasks such as journaling, oral presentations in a group setting, and proposals or plans for work to be undertaken later in the module.

Each module also has a summative assignment(s) which is marked and contributes to your final grade. There is a range of types of summative assignment including written work in the form of essays, exegetical work on biblical passages, preparing mini reports, critical reflections on practical experience, oral presentations to student peers. We use case studies in several modules, and though these may be formative exercises in a group setting, they may also form the basis of a summative assignment, to root the concepts of the module in a personal, pastoral or global situation.

We will inform you of assessment methods and deadlines at the beginning of each module. This information, along with guidance briefings, is also contained in the module handbooks. All assessments must be submitted by the deadlines given in the module handbooks. If there are mitigating circumstances, which mean that you cannot meet a deadline, an extension can be granted, but this must be agreed with the Director of Studies in advance.

We aim to return all assessed assignments within three weeks of the deadline. You will receive extensive, constructive feedback from the relevant tutors on all your assignments, formative and summative, and this is designed to help you to enhance your skills in integrating knowledge and experience, building evidence-based arguments, and communicating effectively.

Progression and graduation requirements

The University's general [regulations](#) for undergraduate awards apply to this programme.

For those who are taking the FD with the aim of applying for accreditation in ministry with the CF, vocational support and guidance will also be provided during the weekends of the programme.

If you wish to be received onto the Roll of Ministries in one of the CF's recognised ministries, then when it comes to the Level 5 work-based module, you must arrange your major placement in that particular ministry area. Once again, this will be talked through with you very clearly at the appropriate time.

Internal and external reference points

This programme specification was formulated with reference to:

- [University mission and values](#)
 - [University 2026 Strategy](#)
 - [QAA subject benchmark statements](#)
 - [Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications](#)
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Date revised: April 2022

Programme originally approved: 20/10/15