

**MASTER OF ARTS (MINISTRY)***incorporating***THE GRADUATE DIPLOMA OF MINISTRY****1. Rationale and Aims of the Course:****(a) Aim and Perceived Need**

The course is aimed at broadening and deepening the ministry concepts begun in the first degree in theology or providing opportunities for initial professional and vocational development after the completion of a first degree in theology. As such it is a course of study for practitioners who already have some ongoing professional experience or for initial professional development.

**(b) Occupational Functions of Graduates**

- church leaders, pastors, and other practitioners who have consolidated their studies in their first degree in theology or ministry, having had the opportunity to concentrate on one field of study throughout the course,
- practitioners who have developed new areas of professional and vocational expertise, having built on the foundation of their first degree in theology or ministry,
- teachers of foundational undergraduate degree units in the graduate's area of specialisation.

**(c) Skills, Knowledge, and Attitudes Acquired by Graduates**

- ability successfully to negotiate the content and demands of a number of units in a specialised field of study in which theological insights are brought to bear upon the graduates' ministry context,
- demonstration of knowledge and competence of skills in the analysis of texts and ideas, and issues in practical ministry,
- demonstration of wide reading, intellectual independence, critical thinking and analytic rigour at early postgraduate level such that the potential for research at masters level is emerging.

**(d) Learning and Teaching Strategies**

- preparation of papers, often taking into account the existing literature on the topic, to be read in seminar sessions for critique by teachers and peers,
- the writing of substantial essays for assessment in which arguments are sustained by evidence, and there is a demonstration of reading across a variety of viewpoints which are empathetically reported,
- the testing of a student's readiness for postgraduate research at masters level by the conducting of an exit piece of research in one field of study for which the candidate is well-prepared by his/her engagement in the coursework program..

**2. Admission Requirements and Assumed Knowledge:****(a) Educational Qualifications for Admission**

- (i) Open as a degree to persons who hold the College's BMin or BTh or to graduates in theology or ministry from a recognised provider considered equivalent to the College's BTh or BMin.
- (ii) Consideration will also be given to other factors such as practical experience, maturity and motivation, and the likelihood of satisfactory completion of the academic requirements of the course.

**(b) Other Admission Provisions**

- (i) Except for those candidates who have a tertiary qualification taught in English, international candidates whose first language is not English will be required to sit an IELTS test. For candidates wishing to enrol in the Master of Arts (Ministry) degree, an average of 7.0, with at least 7.0 for reading and writing, and 6.0 for listening and speaking is required.
- (ii) Non-ACT graduates with undergraduate degrees in theology may need to complete certain preliminary studies before embarking on the coursework masters program.
- (iii) For students undertaking a bridging program that requires six or more units (at least 24 cps), the following existing policy may apply—

*If a student achieves an average mark of at least a Distinction (3.0) in the first three units of their bridging program and includes units from the fields of Old Testament or New Testament or Theology, he or she may bring a case to the Undergraduate and Graduate Coursework Awards Board through the enrolled college to have the last three units of the bridging program waived. The Board in assessing such cases will consider the performance in the studies done at the previous non-ACT college and the fields of study covered.*

- (iv) ACT Bachelor of Christian Studies graduates will need to complete a further year full-time (or part-time equivalent) in undergraduate degree level units to articulate to the MA(Min) coursework program to satisfy the academic requirements for entry. In effect BChrStuds graduates will need to complete the requirements for the BMin, though will not take out that award.
- (v) Bridging programs must normally be completed before entry to the MA(Min) is granted.

**(c) Mature Age Entry and Provisional Admission**

- (i) There is no mature age entry requirement.
- (ii) Provisional candidature will be granted to those who hold the Licentiate in Theology (ThL), or the Advanced Diploma of Theology with a GPA of at least 2.0 as well as a university degree, conditional upon passing four undergraduate units (16 cps) at advanced level with a Credit average (2.0).

Provisional candidates will be required to pass their first two units for their candidature to be confirmed. No distinction is made between full- and part-time students.

**(d) Assumed Knowledge**

Each unit in the Master of Arts (Ministry) will be taught on the understanding that students have a sound grasp of the theological and biblical foundations commensurate with an undergraduate degree in theology or ministry.

**3. Credit Transfer:****(a) Principles**

- (i) Recognised Prior Learning (RPL) applications for admission to the course or applications for transfer of credit will be dealt with initially by approved colleges and then by the Dean of the ACT before final approval is granted. Applications for credit based on recognition of prior learning will be considered in accordance with the guidelines published in "National Principles and Operational Guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)" (AQF, 2004).
- (ii) The ACT regards the qualifications awarded by the affiliated colleges of the Committee of Deans of Theological Consortia as equivalent to its own, assuming that prerequisites for entry to an ACT award are met.
- (iii) The ACT regards accredited degrees in theology and ministry awarded by registered providers in Australia as equivalent to its own degrees assuming that prerequisites for entry to an ACT award are met.

**(b) Admission with Advanced Standing: from completed awards**

- (i) No credit can be claimed for units completed at certificate, (advanced) diploma or undergraduate degree level.
- (ii) Students who hold the ACT's Graduate Diploma of Ministry will be admitted to the degree with 50% advanced standing.
- (iii) Students with a completed fourth year Honours year or its equivalent from an accredited non-ACT award in theology may be granted up to three units (24 cps) in the MA(Min) or GradDipMin. No credit will be given for the coursework masters project.

- (iv) Students with a completed Master of Divinity degree will be given advanced standing for up to two units passed at 700 level (ie. 16 cps) in their MDiv degree.
- (v) Master of Arts (Christian Studies) graduates are able to articulate from the degree to the MA(Min) after a further year (full-time or part-time equivalent) of coursework study as long as such graduates have 4 cps of biblical language. Units taken should fill out what is lacking in the student's theological education. Such a program might include taking out the GradDipMin or 32 credit points in the Master of Divinity degree.

**(c) Admission with Advanced Standing: from incomplete awards**

- (i) Applications for Advanced Standing from incomplete non-ACT awards will not be considered if the units were completed more than ten years previously.
- (ii) Students yet to complete the Graduate Diploma of Theology/Master of Arts (Theology) who seek to transfer to the Graduate Diploma of Ministry/Master of Arts (Ministry), and visa versa, may have successfully completed units transferred subject to requirements of the Graduate Diploma of Ministry/Master of Arts (Ministry).
- (iii) One Masters level unit or units deemed equivalent to 8 cps may be taken at an institution not affiliated with the College. If not a university, preferably such an institution should be affiliated with the other ecumenical consortia (such as the Melbourne College of Divinity, Sydney College of Divinity, the Adelaide College of Divinity, the Perth College of Divinity or the Brisbane College of Theology). Approval will be subject to demonstration that the unit will be assessed at masters level and taught by an appropriately qualified teacher.

**(d) Articulation for Graduates to Higher ACT Awards**

- (i) To the Master of Theology:  
Under certain circumstances the Board may accept an enrolment in the Master of Theology from MA(Min) graduates. Those seeking to undertake research in Ministry and Practice may not need to demonstrate that they have the biblical language requirements normally expected of MTh candidates pursuing research in Bible and Languages and Christian Thought.
- (ii) To the Doctor of Ministry:  
Graduates holding the MA(Min) with a GPA of at least 2.0 and at least a Credit Grade in the project, or who have completed an Honours Degree with Honours Class 1 in the Bachelor of Ministry or Theology, or who have completed an ACT MTh or recognised equivalent, will not be required to submit the preliminary essay as entry to the

DMin. The other experiential pre-requisites must be evident.

Graduates holding the ACT MA(Min), or courses recognised as equivalent, are exempted from Phase 1 of the course provided they have achieved the following outcomes during that prior course:

- A distinction grade (3.0) in units in both theology and biblical studies equivalent to those as required of Phase 1 of the DMin, and
- An average of a credit grade (2.0) across the whole MA(Min) course, and
- Their MA course involved the completion of a 16 cp project achieving at least a credit (2.0) grade.

(iii) To the Doctor of Theology:

Under certain circumstances Master of Arts (Ministry) graduates with a 3.5 GPA overall and a High Distinction in the 16 cp research project may apply for ThD candidature.

#### 4. Course Structure and Curriculum:

##### (a) Duration of Course and Modes of Delivery

- The course is designed as a two-year full-time course. The maximum time of candidature for part-time candidates is six years.
- All units are offered in attendance mode; some in intensive (compressed) mode.
- Units offered once in attendance mode can be offered in distance mode.

##### (b) Course Structure and Progression

- The award requires 64 credit points drawn from the 700 level of graduate units, at least 48 of which will come from units within the Department of Ministry and Practice (EM, PC, DM). Up to 16 cps may be taken from 700 level units in the departments of Bible and Languages (LA, OT, NT) and/or Christian Thought (TH, CH, PE).
- Subject to approval by the enrolling college a student may complete an approved independent study project of 16 credit points for this degree. The project must come from the Department of Ministry and Practice. The project is compulsory for students seeking to articulate to the MTh or ThD degrees.
- Students could exit with a Graduate Diploma of Ministry after successful completion of 32 cps, 24 cps of which would come from approved 700 level units in the Department of Ministry and Practice. No more than 8 cps may be taken from units in the Department of Bible and Languages (LA, OT, NT) and/or Christian Thought (TH, CH, PE). Students graduating with the MA(Min) must surrender the GradDipMin if that has been awarded.
- Generally there are no prerequisites. Some exegesis units in the fields of Old and New Testament may require biblical language skills.
- Students may take an 8000 word project (++750) in the GradDip phase of the degree.

#### (c) Assessment

- (i) Each unit in the MA(Min) requires approximately 8,000 words of writing. The 16 cp project requires 15,000 words (including footnotes but not bibliographies or abstracts), normally an exiting requirement.
- (ii) Each unit requires at least two different pieces of assessment. The major piece, worth 50% of the final grade, must be passed by the candidate. It might take the form of a 4,000 essay or a written three hour exam on the syllabus.

#### 5. Learning Outcomes

##### Coursework Masters (700) Units—

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate superior knowledge and skills in their analysis of texts and ideas, and to arrive at independent judgments appropriate to early postgraduate level in their select area of study. Candidates are expected to demonstrate a developing capacity for further postgraduate research.

##### *Pass*

- demonstrates pronounced ability in engaging primary sources and understands their setting and historical context
- evidences a sound grasp of features of the discipline as they intersect with a select area of study
- shows an ability to evaluate critically a range of scholarly viewpoints with empathy

##### *Credit*

- demonstrates pronounced ability in the analysis of primary sources and understands their setting and historical context
- evidences a confident grasp of the features of the discipline as they intersect with a select area of study
- exhibits an ability to evaluate and assess empathetically a range of scholarly viewpoints that suggests the emergence of independent thinking and research skills required at early postgraduate level

##### *Distinction*

- demonstrates superior ability in the analysis and critique of primary sources and ideas and understands their setting and historical context
- evidences a confident grasp of the features of the discipline as they intersect with a select area of study
- exhibits superior ability in assessing and reporting on a range of scholarly viewpoints empathetically that exhibits the emergence of independent thinking and research skills required at early postgraduate level

*High Distinction*

- demonstrates superior knowledge and skills in the analysis and critique of primary sources and ideas and understands their setting and historical context
- evidences a confident grasp of the features of the discipline as they intersect with a select area of study
- exhibits genuinely independent scholarly judgments appropriate to early postgraduate level in a select area of study

**6. Seminar Unit**

The choice of the topic or theme to be studied is left to approved institutions but must have staff and library support sufficient to sustain the unit. The lecturer concerned is to submit a proposed unit outline along with assessment plans for approval by the relevant moderator.

The unit is conducted as a seminar involving class discussion as well as lectures and individual reading. The unit is not an individual research topic.

1. The total amount of work expected is that equivalent to an essay of approximately 8,000 words;
2. Student must demonstrate a thorough grasp of the theological issues involved;
3. Assessment should be designed to encourage exploration of the personal and pastoral implications of theological perspectives discerned in students' learning.

**Learning outcomes:**

By the end of the unit the student should be able to:

1. show evidence of a sound grasp of features of the discipline as they intersect with a select area of study;
2. analyse primary sources and show an understanding of their setting and historical context;
3. exhibit an ability to evaluate and assess empathetically a range of scholarly viewpoints that suggests the emergence of independent thinking and research skills required at early postgraduate level.

**Bibliographies**

Given the nature of this unit, specialised reading lists will be generated according to the individual topic of study.

**7. Projects****Prerequisites and Exclusions:**

The 16 cp ++790 project is normally attempted at the end of a student's course of study once all other requirements for the award have been satisfactorily completed. However, candidates seeking to fulfil bridging requirements to a higher degree may attempt

the project with approval of their sponsoring institution's course coordinator.

**Objectives:**

- To allow students to pursue in depth a topic of personal and/or vocational interest not studied elsewhere in the degree;
- To enable students to develop research skills at an advanced level, particularly if articulation to a research degree is anticipated;

**Assessment:**

++790 projects are 15,000 words in length (including footnotes and excursuses, but excluding the bibliography and any appendices) are weighted at 16cps.

The project should also contain a synopsis of about 300 words, must not incorporate any material previously submitted by the candidate for any other degree or similar award.

While it need not be an original contribution to knowledge, the essay or project must reflect a conceptual understanding of the area or topic discussed which is commensurate with masters level study (see criteria below for the letter grades). In addition to the range of skills appropriate to superior advanced level candidates, the candidate must demonstrate evidence of reading across viewpoints and report them empathetically, take a point of view and sustain it with evidence, and show evidence of analytical skill and ability to assess critically existing scholarly literature.

**Procedures:**

- The topic of the project must be approved by the relevant field Moderator, using the required Assessment Procedures Form.
- Once the topic is approved, the student is to prepare a fuller proposal to be submitted to his or her sponsoring institution's course coordinator. The proposal should nominate a topic and include a statement of aim and method. The aim of the project must comply with the ethos of the degree. The student must also submit a bibliography of the primary and secondary monographs and articles in the area of theology or biblical studies or ministerial study under investigation.
- Institutions are to ensure that adequate resources are available to the student in order that the research to be undertaken is supportable. In cases of inadequacies in the library holdings of the sponsoring institution, the course coordinator is to locate accessible local resources that will remedy the lack.
- Institutions are to ensure that the student is aware of the academic standard expected of the project.
- Sponsoring institutions are to ensure that students enrolling in the project are adequately supervised by an appropriately qualified member of the faculty

once the proposal has been approved by the student's sponsoring institution. A co-supervisor may be drawn from the ranks of adjunct faculty, especially those who might be invited to lecture aspects of subjects taught by the student's sponsoring institution.

- Any student undertaking human subject research as part of their project must gain approval from the ACT's Ethics Committee before commencing their research. Applications forms can be obtained from their sponsoring college.

**Examination:**

The coordinator, in consultation with the candidate, is expected to submit the names of three or four possible external examiners of the project to the Dean for his or her consideration. Potential examiners should not be approached by the candidate or coordinator before names are submitted. It is the ACT's responsibility to invite and appoint such examiners, though always in consultation with the student's sponsoring college.

When the project is ready for submission, it must be sent to the ACT along with the following signed certification:

*Candidate*

The following project, of which I have kept a copy, is entirely the work of the undersigned and all sources of ideas and expressions are duly acknowledged in footnotes or endnotes. This project does not incorporate any material previously submitted by me for any other degree or similar award.

*Supervisor*

I consider that this project is in a form suitable for examination and conforms to the requirements of the Australian College of Theology.

