

## **Master of Divinity (M.Div.)**

- The church calls for seminaries to train a new generation of visionary leaders who are thoroughly steeped in scripture and the theological traditions of historical Christianity and are prepared to interpret contemporary thought and life. Such leaders must be able to model and inspire the deepest levels of Christian commitment while leading increasingly complex organizations.
- Students come to seminary in search of knowledge, skills for ministry, and a profound experience in community of the gospel's liberating power.
- The Union Presbyterian Seminary faculty affirms with the church that a genuine vocation to Christian service and a passion for the gospel lie at the base of all faithful ministry, while recognizing that the local congregation continues to be the primary context for which graduates of the Master of Divinity program are being prepared.

### **Goals**

In order to be faithful to our particular vision of theological education for the 21st century, the Union Presbyterian Seminary faculty has adopted the following goals for the Master of Christian Education degree program.

**A. Scripture and Christian Theological Traditions**

- 1) Our graduates demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the Old and New Testaments and understand their normative significance for Christian life and faith.
- 2) Our graduates interpret the Bible wisely, with careful discipline (a) that attends to the contexts of the literary formation and transmission of scriptural witnesses in the histories of ancient Israel and the early church and (b) that is appropriately responsive both to confessional traditions of the church and to the needs of people to hear messages of God's justice and grace for today.
- 3) Our graduates know the classic theological traditions of the Christian church, especially its Reformed expressions, and, using those traditions wisely as resources, think theologically about their life and ministry, and about the practices and issues of congregations.

**B. Christian Faith and Cultural Contexts**

- 1) Our graduates comprehend the broad development of Christian thought, from antiquity to the present, and the history of the institutional church in its principal expressions and its major engagements with the world.
- 2) Our graduates understand the contextual character of faith and have the knowledge and skills to read the culture of a congregation and its setting in community, and to make connections between cultural analysis and theological discernment.
- 3) Our graduates understand that the witness of the church is global, and are attentive to a religiously and culturally plural world.
- 4) Our graduates understand that faithful ministry involves knowledge of, and engagement with, a world that is not the church, but that is God's world. They are not reluctant to engage in dialogue between theological disciplines and other fields of knowledge.

**C. Ministerial and Public Leadership**

- 1) Our graduates communicate the gospel with clarity and conviction in ministries of preaching and liturgical leadership that are (a) informed by the theological tradition of the church and (b) engaged with contemporary realities, needs and challenges.
- 2) Our graduates teach effectively and have the knowledge and skills to enable congregations to be communities of teaching and learning for all ages.
- 3) Our graduates provide pastoral care with competence, integrity, and self-awareness, and know when and how to make referrals to appropriate professionals.
- 4) Our graduates offer capable leadership to churches and other organizations, and demonstrate the ability to function effectively in groups.

**D. Vocational Formation**

- 1) Our graduates commit to a continuing relationship with the living God and have the knowledge, piety, and skills to enable spiritual and moral growth in themselves and others.
- 2) Our graduates engage in a disciplined program of professional development.
- 3) Our graduates practice ministry as a collegial activity, and nurture mutually supportive relationships and cooperative efforts.

The course of studies leading to the M.Div. degree is constructed in accordance with the standards of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada and the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. It also complies with the academic requirements for ordination in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and assists students of other denominations to meet the requirements of their traditions.

**Admission**

Candidates for the M.Div. program normally must have received a bachelor's degree (B.A. or B.S.) from a four-year college or university accredited by one of the nationally-recognized regional accrediting agencies in the United States, or hold an equivalent educational credential from another country. There are additional requirements for admission to the M.Div. program. For detailed information, see [chapter 6](#).

**Residency and Time Requirements**

The M.Div. program ordinarily takes at least three years, or five years on the Charlotte campus. If a student elects to take a year-long Student-in-Ministry (SIM) internship, at least four years are required. With the written permission of the associate dean for academic programs, students on the Richmond campus may take up to six years to complete this degree. Ordinarily, students may earn up to 10.5 credits in each nine-month academic year. Information regarding course loads and full-time status for every degree program can be found in [chapter 4, Academic Procedures and Regulations](#).

**Advanced Standing**

Students who have earned the M.A.C.E. degree or its equivalent from an ATS-accredited institution within eight years of beginning the M.Div. degree program at Union Presbyterian Seminary may be eligible for admission with advanced standing. A student who qualifies for advanced standing must complete at least 20 credits toward the M.Div. degree at Union Presbyterian Seminary, with a cumulative GPA of at least 2.0. All other policies pertaining to the M.Div. apply. The appropriate dean or associate dean, in consultation with faculty departments as needed, will determine which courses must be included within the (minimum of) 20 credits to be completed at Union Presbyterian Seminary. In any case in which it is determined that all core requirements in an academic department have been satisfied by previous work, completion of at least one elective in that curricular area will be required.

**Courses in the M.Div. Curriculum****Basic Courses**

Students must earn 32 credits to receive the M.Div. degree. Twelve basic courses are required. These introduce students to particular fields of study and are designed to provide knowledge and skills for additional work in the fields. Two basic courses each are required in Old Testament, New Testament, History of Christianity, and Theology. One basic course is required in each of Christian Ethics, Preaching and Worship, the Teaching Ministry of the Church, and Pastoral Care. Students must also take an elective course in Preaching and/or Worship. These 13 courses, plus four credits in elementary biblical language courses, and four credits in supervised ministry, constitute the standard core curriculum.

**Language Courses**

Introductory knowledge of biblical Hebrew and Greek is prerequisite for taking the basic courses in Old Testament and New Testament. Courses in the biblical languages are offered at Union Presbyterian Seminary both in the summer and in the nine-month academic year. Students who successfully complete a Greek or Hebrew course in the seven-week intensive summer term earn two credits. Upon admission, a student may request that the associate dean for academic programs (or the dean of Union Presbyterian Seminary, Charlotte Campus for Charlotte students) arrange for proficiency exams in either or both Elementary Greek and Elementary Hebrew. The administrative fee for each exam is \$150. Successful completion of the exam(s) does not earn academic credit, but will allow the student to bypass these courses in the curriculum. A student who has completed at least one year of either or both languages (with grades of B or above) not more than two years before enrolling in Union Presbyterian Seminary may request that the proficiency exam(s) and required Greek or Hebrew courses be waived. The associate dean (or dean of Union Presbyterian Seminary, Charlotte Campus), after consulting with the chair of the biblical department, will act on the request. No academic credit at Union Presbyterian Seminary is earned if the student is exempted from the required language course(s). The student is still required to complete 32 credits to earn the M.Div. degree. A student who fails a proficiency exam in either language for a second time will be dismissed from Union Presbyterian Seminary. The student bears all costs for the exam.

**Supervised Ministry**

Supervised ministry is a vital part of theological education during which students are given the opportunity to put into practice their learning from the classroom, test their call, gain confidence, and develop competence in ministry. Four supervised ministry credits are required for graduation. Ordinarily no more than five credits may be earned in supervised ministry. However, students who take any other supervised ministry course in addition to a student-in-ministry (SIM) year may earn six credits toward fulfillment of degree requirements.

M.Div./M.A.C.E. dual degree students are permitted to earn up to six credits in supervised ministry toward fulfillment of degree requirements.

Of the four required supervised ministry credits, two should be earned in a parish setting and two in a non-parish setting. Examples of non-parish settings include but are not limited to homeless shelters, nursing homes, camps, social agencies, prisons, and chaplaincy or Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). SIM students are not required to earn supervised ministry credits in two different settings.

Many students choose Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) as their non-parish supervised ministry. CPE is a nationally accredited program offered in hospitals and other institutions which includes clinical training, peer learning, and supervision. Students who complete a full unit of CPE during the summer or academic year earn two supervised ministry credits. Students who complete a half-unit of CPE in any term earn one supervised ministry credit.

The four campus-based supervised ministry options are outlined as follows. Positions are ordinarily available in both types of settings for each of these choices.

1) *Student-in-Ministry (SIM)*

In the SIM option, students work in an approved ministry setting for 12 to 15 months full-time for pay and do not take any other courses. Students ordinarily participate in the SIM program after their second year of study at Union Presbyterian Seminary. Students may not take a SIM year after their third year of study unless they have the permission of the associate dean for academic programs or the dean of Union Presbyterian Seminary at Charlotte and of the Office of Supervised Ministry and Vocational Planning. Successful completion of a SIM year earns four supervised ministry credits, which fulfills all supervised ministry requirements for the M.Div. degree.

2) *Summer Supervised Ministry*

In the summer supervised ministry option, students work full-time in an approved setting for ten weeks (400 hours). Students ordinarily participate in this option during their first or second summer. Students may not take any other course in the same summer that they take this supervised ministry option. Successful completion of a summer supervised ministry earns two supervised ministry credits, which fulfills half of the supervised ministry requirements for the M.Div. degree.

3) *Academic-year Supervised Ministry*

In an academic-year supervised ministry placement, students work in an approved setting during the nine-month academic year for 30 weeks (400 hours). This option begins with the fall term and also includes the January and May terms. The course includes required peer-group seminars throughout the academic year. Participants in this program may take only three other courses in each of the long terms concurrent with their supervised ministry. Successful completion of this option earns two supervised ministry credits, which fulfills half of the supervised ministry requirements for the M.Div. degree.

4) *Two-year Student-in-Ministry Year*

An extended SIM option is available for students who will be serving in congregations or agencies for two years. During each of the two spring and two fall terms over the two year period, students work part-time and one credit will be earned for a total of four credits. The student must also work full-time at the same setting during the summer following the spring of the first year. No credits are earned during the summer term, and no additional courses may be taken during the summer term. Successful completion of the two year SIM fulfills all supervised ministry requirements for the M.Div.

Requirements for supervised ministry at the Charlotte campus mirror those at the Richmond campus. The primary difference is the naming of the terms due to Charlotte's trimester academic calendar. Supervised ministry in Charlotte may be taken for two credits in one term or for one credit in each of two consecutive terms.

**Elective Courses**

Electives are designed to enhance knowledge and skills in various fields. Some build upon basic courses and others introduce additional areas of learning.

**Intercultural Study Opportunities**

Each year intercultural electives are offered during the short terms, typically including travel seminars to Latin America, the Middle East, Asia, Ghana, and Italy. Other courses regularly take place at the Overseas Ministry Study Center in New Haven, Connecticut. Students are encouraged to participate in these courses.

**Directed Studies**

Students may plan and carry out, with institutional procedures for approval, a limited number of self-initiated courses of study that can be a model for continuing education. Directed study courses allow students to design a course not normally offered in the Union Presbyterian Seminary curriculum. All Directed studies must be approved by the associate dean or dean of the Charlotte campus.

**Summary of Requirements for the M.Div. Degree****Course requirements**

12 credits in basic courses + 4 credits in elementary Greek and Hebrew + 4 credits in supervised ministry courses + 12 credits in elective courses = 32 total credits required for graduation.

**Required courses (20 credits)***Biblical Languages (4 credits)*

Hebrew I & II (BIB 001-002 or 003)

Greek I & II (BIB 004-005 or 006)

*Basic Courses (12 credits)*

Old Testament I (BIB211)

Old Testament II (BIB311)

New Testament I (BIB221)

New Testament II (BIB321)

Theology I (THE101)

Theology II (THE201)

Introduction to Christian Ethics (THE102)

History of Christianity I (HST101)

History of Christianity II (HST201)

The Teaching Ministry of the Church (EDU186)

Introduction to Pastoral Care (PRA102)

Preaching and Worship (PRA103)

*Supervised Ministry (4 credits)*

(4 required, 5 allowed; 6 allowed with SIM and other supervised ministry experience)

SIM year earns 4 credits

or

2 credits in parish setting, 2 in non-parish setting

**Elective courses (12 credits)**

(including at least one elective in Preaching and/or Worship)

**Portfolio-based assessment process** (Required for graduation; earns no credit.)

**Total 32 credits**

**Other Requirements for Graduation**

Each M.Div. student shall participate in a portfolio-based assessment process, as described in the Student Handbook. This assessment process provides structured opportunities that support intentional, reflective integration of the academic work of students with their personal, spiritual, and vocational formation.

The faculty considers three factors before recommending a student to the Board of Trustees for a degree or other recognition at graduation: (1) the course of study pursued, (2) the quality of work done, and (3) the quality of life manifested. In the usual language of the Reformed tradition, that quality of life should be “becoming to a minister of the gospel.”

Students are expected to maintain high professional standards, personal integrity, and a certain quality of community life while at Union Presbyterian Seminary (see [Student Handbook](#)).

**M.Div. at Charlotte**

The M.Div. degree may also be earned through the Charlotte campus. Degree requirements in the Charlotte and Richmond academic programs are the same. The Charlotte program is designed for part-time, non-residential students who ordinarily attend classes on Friday and/or Saturday.