Ministerial Formation



Regent's Park College
Oxford

WHO ARE WE?

Regent's Park College is unique. Shaped by a history stretching back to the eighteenth century, our place within the University of Oxford, as well as the Baptist Union of Great Britain, means that there is nowhere better to discover and nurture your vocation – whatever it may be!

We are a radical and pioneering community, and always have been. Our roots can be traced to a Baptist Education Society (f. 1752) and the Stepney Academy (f. 1810), both in London and both educating Dissenters excluded from the ancient universities by their confessional identities.

We are a diverse community, specialising in the Arts and Humanities, with a vibrant student body in which ministerial students play a vital role. Ministerial formation has always been at the heart of our work, but today this takes place within a wider context, alongside approximately 200 undergraduate and postgraduate students reading for a range of Oxford degrees.

We are a global community, enjoying the friendship and support of Baptists around the world. Our alumni and friends are leading the church internationally, from North America to Eastern Europe and India, and our courses provide opportunities for current students to experience the global Baptist tradition.

We are an ecumenical community, offering students the best of Baptist life as well as partnerships with Anglicans, Catholics and others. We learn and worship not only as Baptists, but also in the richness of the wider Christian tradition.

College life

Life at Regent's is rich and varied, presenting ministerial students with an array of opportunities for academic and spiritual growth, and extracurricular enrichment.

In our daily life as a Christian community, the Chapel provides an important focus. Ministerial students begin and end the day with prayer. The main services take place on Tuesdays and Friday evenings. The wider community is an ecumenical one and worship tends to reflect this diversity, whilst retaining Baptist roots.

Sharing meals is another way that we foster community, both in term time and in block weeks. Special dinners mark important events and student achievements. Ministerial students are encouraged, as far as time and circumstance allow, to be as fully part of this wider community as possible.



Oxford's libraries are world-class. The College has its own well-stocked library, and students may also use the historic Bodleian Library, and the libraries of the Faculty of Theology and Religion and the Department for Continuing Education (OUDCE).

Regent's is formally a member of the Southern Counties Baptist Association and the Baptist Union of Great Britain, but also has excellent relationships with other Associations. One way this is expressed is through a programme of Community Learning. The College is committed to serving the churches and sharing in the mission of God in every aspect of its life.

The Oxford academic year is divided into three terms, and we teach for eight or nine weeks each term. Students come to college every Tuesday in term time, though learning is also supported by technology in various ways. There are also four 'block weeks' a year, the week before each of the three term starts and then two days just after the end of the summer term.

A typical Tuesday during term time would be:

9:45am - Coffee and prayer
10:15am - Session 1
11:45am - Tutorials
12:30pm - Lunch
1:15am - Prayer Groups
2:00pm - Session 2
3:45pm - Session 3
5:00pm - Tutorials
5:45pm - Worship
6:30pm - Dinner



Patterns of Formation

At Regent's, we celebrate the diversity of our student body – and our mission is to enable each individual to foster their own gifts, in the context of a deepening understanding of Christian life and thought. Options for ministerial formation and training are flexible and varied. Our students are not expected to tow any 'party line' or to fit into a particular mould, but are encouraged and equipped to think for themselves.

All of our programmes provide students with opportunities to explore aspects of Biblical Studies, Christian Theology, Mission, and Ministry. These include worship, preaching, leadership, pioneer mission, interfaith relationships, pastoral care, cross-cultural mission, weddings and funerals, evangelism, sexuality and developing spirituality.

'Block weeks' focus on particular aspects of ministry in real depth. These include, for instance, creative approaches to mission, or handling death, dying and bereavement. Block weeks are also important for fellowship, building relationships between students and with academic staff.

We offer various patterns for preparing for ministry, and whilst they have much in common, each has its own distinct benefits.

College-based Formation

This pattern enables students to spend more time in the College, taking full advantage of access to Oxford's resources. College-based students do not necessarily live on-site but they will generally be enrolled on full-time academic courses, either an undergraduate or post-graduate in Theology. Despite its academic weighting, this pattern gives college-based students many opportunities to explore the interaction between learning and practice. Working with experienced ministers, for instance, they will undertake a placement in a local church (first and second year) and in a hospital (third year).

Congregation-based Formation

This pattern is suitable for students who have also been called to serve as a Minister-in-Training, in churches which otherwise lack pastoral oversight, or as an Assistant Minister within a team. Central to this pattern is the integration of study and pastoral experience, so that students can reflect on what is learned in the pastorate and, in turn, enrich their practice with new insights and ideas. Students normally work for their church half-time and study half-time, coming into the College one day a week during term-time and for the four block weeks per year.

Chaplaincy-based Formation

This is very similar to the congregation-based pattern, but the main focus of the student's engagement in ministry is the chaplaincy. This experience is enriched by exposure to life in a local church

ARE YOU A PIONEER?

All ministerial students reflect on pioneering approaches to church and, of course, ministry is always pastoral, encountering people in their joy and brokenness. These are both dimensions of our mission-oriented understanding of the church and all of our programmes seek to prepare students for creative mission.

However, it is also possible for students to place a greater emphasis on being a 'pioneer' through a pathway taught in partnership with Pioneer Mission Leadership Training run by the Church Mission Society (CMS). For these students, classes take place between Regent's and CMS, and placements are arranged in order to create opportunities to meet Baptist pioneers and others in the wider Christian tradition.





Academic programmes

Students without any formal theological education follow an undergraduate track, based on the BTh suite of courses. These build solid foundations in Biblical Studies and Christian Doctrine, and allow students to reflect on contemporary society and the mission and ministry of the church, combining the best of traditional courses with a concern for application and practice.

Within the BTh suite all students begin with a Certificate in Theological Studies (CTS). This is a one year full-time or two-year part-time course, and students take six papers (or modules): Introductions to Old and New Testaments, Church History and Christian Doctrine, Mission and Contemporary Culture, and Introductions to Ministry and Worship. The majority of papers are assessed by a mixture of essays, projects and portfolios; languages have written exams.

Following the CTS, students opt to transfer to a Diploma in Theological Studies (DTS) or a Bachelor of Theology degree (BTh). We offer the same teaching for all students, but BTh students must submit more assessment, often completed in the first two years in ministry.

DTS students take six papers, exploring further issues in Biblical Studies, Theology, Mission and Ministry. All papers are assessed by a mixture of essays, projects and portfolios, although there is also the option to choose written exams for some papers. BTh students take an additional 12 papers, exploring in greater depth Biblical Studies, Theology, Mission and Ministry, including a dissertation or extended project. Apart from optional language exams all other papers can be assessed by essays, projects and portfolios.

Alternatively, *for those with an undergraduate degree in a subject other than Theology,* we offer a Post-Graduate Diploma in Theology - a one year full-time or two year part-time course, which can act as a bridging qualification for an MTh in Applied Theology. *For those with a degree in Theology,* we offer a range of postgraduate options, allowing for various kinds of specialisation. *For those with significant theological qualifications,* it may be most appropriate to take a college-level ministerial course without the requirement of a university degree.

An MTh in Applied Theology is a very useful course in preparing for ministry and/or a postgraduate research degree.

The MTh allows a high degree of flexibility and choice in subjects, and is assessed by four long essays in 'Part 1' and then a 20,000-word dissertation in 'Part 2'. The MTh syllabus offers several broad areas of study, within which essay titles are chosen in conjunction with a tutor. For the first two terms of the first year, there are classes on a Friday morning, which means that congregation-based students make two weekly trips to Oxford during term.

It is also possible to take a one-year MSt, two-year MPhil, or three-year DPhil in a number of theological disciplines.

Our people

Oxford students have access to leading academic resources, not only in the libraries but also in the College's tutors.

The Ministerial Formation Team bring much experience of local church and denominational life as well as a strong academic background. A range of other speakers and ministers are involved in the overall programme. More information about our academic staff can be found on the College's website.



Could God be calling you?

What path should you take?

If you have questions about vocation and ministerial formation, we would like to hear from you.

It is not our custom to hold 'open days' for ministerial programmes, but we will arrange a time for you to visit the College.

In this personal way, we hope to help you to discern God's call in your life and to discover what the next steps may be for you.

For more information, contact

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