



WTC ACADEMIC QUALITY ASSURANCE POLICY

July 2025

WTC Academic Quality Assurance Policy	
Purpose	To outline the processes in place to ensure a consistent and high standard of academic quality at WTC.
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Approved by	Executive Team
Next Review	July 2026
Staff member responsible for update	Dean of Studies
Policy / procedure relevant to	External - WTC website; MyWTC

1. Introduction

It is the policy of WTC Theology to create, deliver, and assess high quality academic programmes, incorporating the theological disciplines of Systematic Theology, Doctrine, Biblical Studies, Spiritual Formation, History of Spirituality and Religion, Missiology, Ethics and Ecclesiology. This policy document outlines the processes in place to ensure a consistent and high standard of academic quality throughout the curriculum development, delivery, and assessment of all academic programmes at WTC.

2. Academic Governance Framework

Within WTC, the Board of Trustees hold the Senior Academic Team (President, Principal, and Dean of Studies) to account for the standard of content delivery. The Dean of Studies line-manages the Faculty and oversees directly the development of all course material. The Senior Academic Team is responsible for shaping the curriculum for all programmes and ensuring that a high standard of teaching and assessment is maintained in all areas.

Externally, Birmingham Newman University (BNU - WTC's validating partner) and three independent External Examiners (two UG, one PG) hold the college to account for the quality of its curriculum development and its standards of assessment.

3. Quality Assurance Processes

3.1. Curriculum and module development

3.1.1. TRS Benchmark Statement

The curricula for all programmes have been designed in accordance with the QAA Benchmark Statement for Theology and Religious Studies.

3.1.2. Curriculum development

All programmes are reviewed periodically as part of WTC's ongoing commitment to maintaining a high quality and up-to-date curriculum, and a clear process is followed to ensure this is done to the highest standards. The curriculum design process for all programmes, including the development of any new programmes, is managed by WTC's Senior Academic Team, comprising the President, Principal, and Dean of Studies. They oversee an annual Curriculum Audit of all programmes, to address any matters that have arisen through the year, and a biannual full Curriculum Review, which is the primary forum for proposing, evaluating, and deciding substantial changes to programmes. This four-stage review process includes two Programme Development Panels, in which the Academic Team consults with representatives from the Faculty, the student body, and external

academics. The full process is detailed in the document *WTC Process for Curriculum Design*.

3.1.3. Module development

Modules are developed by the appointed module lead, in consultation with the senior Academic Team and the Registry team. The Senior Academic Team works closely with the module lead to ensure that an appropriate Module Data Set is written, which meets the academic standards of WTC and BNU, sets appropriate Course Aims and Learning Outcomes, and includes an engaging, relevant, and far-reaching syllabus. They also work with the module lead to write academically appropriate assessments and to collate a suitable bibliography that will enable students of all levels to demonstrate their learning. Each of these module components (Data Set, Syllabus, Assignments, Bibliography) are reviewed annually both by the module lead and the senior Academic Team to ensure that module development continues in line with current scholarship and teaching & learning standards.

3.1.4. External Examiner

Both the curriculum and all new modules (or amended modules) are reviewed and approved by an independent External Examiner (EE), who will work with the Senior Academic Team and the module lead to ensure that the standards of WTC and BNU are met and maintained across all programmes. WTC has three External Examiners: two for undergraduate programmes and one for postgraduate programmes.

3.1.5. Collaborative Provision

Once a new and/or amended module has been approved by the Academic Team and the EE, the Module Data Set, Syllabus, Assessments, and Bibliography (the Core Documents) are submitted to the Collaborative Provision team at BNU for final approval. BNU confirms that the course material meets the quality and standards of the university and validates the module(s) for delivery from the following academic year.

3.2. Teaching and Learning

Ensuring a consistently high quality of teaching that serves a diverse student body with a range of learning skills is paramount to the success of our programmes, and so the modes and standard of teaching in the classroom are carefully monitored throughout the year.

3.2.1 Teaching modes

Each programme at WTC is designed to meet appropriate Aims and Learning Outcomes, as described in the Programme Validation documentation for each programme and Module Data Sets for each module. Students are enabled to

achieve these Aims and Learning Outcomes through the following teaching and learning methods:

- Lectures
- Seminars
- Classes
- Tutorials
- Workshops
- Formative Assignments
- Research Formative Tasks
- Guided Reading
- Extended long periods of residential reflection and study
- Pre-recorded audio-visual presentations
- Video-conference call seminars
- Conference call tutorials

All WTC programmes encourage students to critically analyse a range of themes from a number of perspectives and to apply insights from other disciplines to further theological reflection. To do this, each programme engages students in the reading, analysis, and interpretation of texts, developing in students an ability to engage in the close reading of primary and secondary sources.

Moreover, they encourage students to engage critically and with sensitivity the claims to certainty that arise within theological traditions and to reflect critically on their own positions.

Students apply and evaluate a number of methods of study in analysing material and are given opportunities to identify their own independent areas of enquiry.

All modules cultivate empathy, self-discipline, and the ability to respond sensitively to diverse views, as well as developing writing skills, with some modules also developing oral presentation skills, and facilitating greater media literacy.

At level 4, learning in the classroom is tutor-designed and guided, and students are supported in developing individual initiative and collaborative inquiry within this framework, which provides groundwork in critical reflection, subject-specific methods, transferable study skills and skills of accurate, creative communication.

At level 5, learning in the classroom remains largely tutor-guided with encouragement to work in collaboration with tutors and fellow-students, but with more opportunity for independent learning. There is opportunity for consolidation and development of appropriate study skills and for experiencing a wider range of appropriate methods of study, and opportunity to apply their learning and skills in a placement.

At level 6, students develop a greater responsibility for their own learning, both independent and collaborative. BA students are expected to undertake a piece of independent research.

At level 7, students are expected all the more to take ownership of their own learning, both independent and collaborative. As with the BA, students conclude their studies by undertaking a piece of independent research (either as a dissertation or practical theology project).

3.2.2 Maintaining teaching and learning standards

- **Faculty Training:** WTC is committed to offering regular training for its Faculty, and does so in a number of ways. New Faculty will be inducted by the Senior Academic Team, in line with WTC's **Faculty Induction Process** (see Appendix 1). New and existing Faculty are also given access to video and written training resources (e.g. How to teach online seminars; Teaching students with learning or physical difficulties; Marking and moderation), in addition to detailed descriptions of Faculty responsibilities, processes, and tasks, all of which can be found in the **Faculty Handbook**, accessed through their Faculty portal {MyWTC} account. Further information and support is available in the Study Skills Handbook, available on WTC's Virtual Learning Environment (Moodle). Twice each year at the Residentials, in-person training is provided to the teaching Faculty. This is typically focused on improving classroom practice, supporting students with learning difficulties and marking. The exact content of this training will be decided by the Academic Team, in consultation with the Learning Development Support Tutor.
- **Peer reviews:** The Faculty is required to take part in a peer review process each year, carried out during the two Residential weeks in September and January. Faculty attend one another's lectures and provide feedback on strengths and opportunities for future improvement. Normal practice is for all Faculty to be peer reviewed across a two-year rolling schedule. Where this is not possible, priority is given to new Faculty and any Faculty who for one reason or another were not peer reviewed in the previous two-year cycle.
- **Student feedback:** At the end of every module, students are invited to give written feedback via an online survey. They comment specifically on the quality of content, delivery, assessment, and feedback given in the module. Their responses are reviewed by the Academic Team and discussed with the relevant module tutors as part of an annual end-of-year one-to-one review. Any observations regarding quality and standards are noted and opportunities for ongoing improvement are discussed. Where the feedback is non-specific to a particular module, it is discussed at the next Board of Studies (BoS) (see below). A Student Representative is elected from each Hub to channel student feedback to the central WTC team

throughout the year. Representatives from the Senior Executive Team (SET) and Academic Team meet with the Student Reps twice a year to answer questions and respond to specific feedback. Opportunities for improvement are noted and discussed with Faculty as relevant.

- **Board of Studies:** Three times a year, the Faculty is invited to attend a BoS meeting online. These meetings are opportunities for the SET and Academic Team to pass on information, for Faculty to discuss any matters that have arisen during the year, for training (e.g. recent BoS meetings have included training in both marking and teaching online seminars), and for discussions concerning key issues of quality and standards that apply across the college. It is common for these discussions to take the form of sharing wisdom and experience, in the spirit of encouraging one another to continually improve our quality of work.

3.3. Assessment

3.2.1 Formative assessment

Formative assessment refers to any learning-based activity that leads to developmental feedback to help students engage more richly with their learning and prepare for future studies and summative assessed work. These can be self-assessed, peer-assessed, or tutor-assessed. Formative assessment is not graded, and does not directly contribute to a module's result.

WTC recognises the importance of formative assessment as an aid to the learning experience, and as such all modules at all levels include some level of formative assessment. For example, all modules ask students to produce and submit an assignment plan for every summative assessment in advance of submission in order for the tutor to give feedback and guide the student towards ways to strengthen their work. Other examples of formative assessments include:

- Essay plans and introductions
- Textual annotation and commentaries
- Oral presentations
- Group-led discussions
- Class-based or Moodle-based quizzes
- Visual and/or multimedia presentations
- Portfolio presentations
- Draft chapters (for research projects)

Formative assessment feedback given by tutors early in a module is particularly important at Level 4, when students may be new to Higher Education. As such, all Level 4 students are given formative experiences within the module or programme for any type of summative assessment they will encounter at that level. For example, all Level 4 students begin their studies with a Study Skills induction which covers essay writing technique, research skills, academic

integrity, and seeking support; and all Faculty are asked to build specific guidance to students for completing assignments into their teaching schedule. Where new forms of assessment are introduced at Levels 5 or 6, again formative exercises are used. For example, all Level 6 students begin Level 6 study with a module dedicated to preparing them for researching and writing a dissertation.

Early assessment can also be helpful in identifying students who require support in developing their academic writing.

3.2.2 Summative assessment

Summative assessment refers to any formally graded piece of work which contributes to the final mark of a module or programme. All modules are founded on summative assessments, which may build on formative assessments or may stand independently from them.

Students may be expected to demonstrate achievement of the intended learning outcomes using the following summative assessment methods:

- Essays
- Dissertations/research projects
- Textual commentaries
- Oral presentations
- Portfolios of evidence
- Book/article reviews
- Case studies and case study reports/analyses
- Reflective logs and/or extended reflective writing
- Academic posters
- Biblical language word studies

In academic modules and for some skills-based assignments the topic and title of written assessments is set beforehand by the module leader. For some skills- and context-based assignments students are able to formulate an appropriate topic and title that assess prescribed learning outcomes with the module leader or with the Dean of Studies.

The context- and skills-based module assessments may expect students to provide portfolios of evidence that contain, for example: verbatim reports of critical incidents in ministry, teaching and preaching material created by the student, appropriate student journal entries, supervisor reports, fieldwork data, and research tools.

The normal pattern is that:

At **Levels 4, 5 and 6**: 10-credit modules have one assignment with a word total equivalent of 2,000 (besides any portfolio of evidence). 20-credit modules have two assignments with a word total equivalent of 4,000 (besides any portfolio of evidence).

At **Level 7**: 10 credits modules have one assignment with a word count equivalent of 2,500. 20-credit modules have two assignments with a word total equivalent of 5,000 (besides any portfolio of evidence). However, assessment methods are chosen for fitness of purpose with the modular Learning Outcomes and so some may vary from this prevailing pattern.

Also, given that some students on the programme have little or no experience of essay writing and the study skills associated with essays, there is teaching that inducts students into this form of assessment at the beginning of the programme and the Learning Development Tutor is available to provide support throughout the student journey, both within group and 1-2-1 sessions.

3.2.3 Monitoring of assessment

- **Faculty training:** Specific training on the processes and standards of marking and moderation of assessments is included in all new Faculty inductions. Where possible, new Faculty will be supported in their first year by a senior member of Faculty who will moderate their module(s) and be available to offer ongoing guidance. WTC's central academic team is available to provide further support in marking as needed. Marking and moderation training is also provided regularly at Faculty Training Days.
- **Marking Criteria:** All assessments are marked in accordance with WTC's level-appropriate marking criteria, as described in the WTC Marking Criteria documents (see section 7.1 of the Faculty Handbook).
- **Assignment Moderation:** Marking quality, standard and the feedback given to students is monitored. All module assessments are moderated by a second member of Faculty (where possible, who teaches in the same academic discipline). All marks below 40% (for Levels 4-6), below 50% (for Level 7), or above 69% (for all Levels) are moderated, as well as a reasonable sampling of marks in between (defined as no less than six papers, and approximately a quarter of the papers in total). Where there is a discrepancy between the marker and moderator, they will discuss and decide together on the final mark to be given. Where no agreement can be reached, it is referred to the Dean of Studies who decides the final mark. The marking and moderation process for each module is recorded on an Assessment Moderation Form (see section 7.0 of the Faculty Handbook).
- **Dissertation Second Marking:** Consistent and high quality marking is applied to all submitted BA and MA dissertations. All dissertations, at Levels 6 and 7, are marked by two Faculty - the student's supervisor (who acts as lead marker) and another Faculty member, where possible teaching in the same academic discipline. Both markers determine an appropriate mark and write detailed feedback, according to the Level 7 Marking Criteria (see Section 7.1 of the Faculty Handbook). They then discuss their marks and agree on a final mark and cumulative feedback, which is produced by the

lead marker, filling out the documentation found in section 7.2 of the Faculty Handbook. As with all assessment marking, dissertation marking will be the subject of both induction and ongoing Faculty training.

- **External Examiner and Module Assessment Board:** At the end of each academic year, all of the marks and feedback given to students across the year are monitored by the EE. The EE confirms that the appropriate quality and standards of marking and moderation have been met, and feeds back to WTC on any action points for raising standards in this essential aspect of the college's academic responsibilities.
- **Academic Conduct:** WTC recognises that good academic conduct (often referred to as 'academic integrity') is a key issue for all academic work. All new students receive training at the start of their studies with WTC on the importance of good academic conduct, and the seriousness of academic misconduct. All new students sign an Academic Conduct Awareness Form following this training. Any suspected issues of academic conduct are referred to the Dean of Studies, who investigates and applies the appropriate penalty in line with WTC's **Academic Conduct Policy** (available to all registered students on the student portal, MyWTC). New Faculty are introduced to this policy and process as part of their induction and this is regularly revisited with current Faculty at BoS meetings and/or Faculty Training Days.

Appendix 1 WTC Faculty Induction Process

Actions to be completed by <u>incoming Faculty member & all other staff</u> once employment is confirmed	Complete
First Conversation (ASAP) (Academic)	
Discuss WTC values, stakeholders, and partners	
Explain basic functioning of WTC's teaching and assessment	
Send terms letter and Faculty Handbook (Registry)	
Signing Contract (April) (Registry and Operations)	
Consent by email to Safeguarding Code of Conduct	
Sign up to Data Handling Policy	
Signed Terms of Engagement returned	
Faculty details form completed	
Bank details given to the finance team	
Schedule of payments explained	
Get Faculty Approved as Tutor with Chester	
Receive Core documents from faculty	
Preparing for first residential (May/June) (Academic)	
Discuss planning and delivery of Residential teaching	
Discuss parameters of good class-notes	
Discuss recording first CC lectures at the Residential (see below)	
Being an academic outside the classroom (emails, contact with students, availability, etc.)	
Who's who? Registry, IT, Academic, Operations.	
Dissertation supervision where appropriate	
Ministry in the classroom	
Moodle and CDMS Overview	
Explain Discussion/Announcement functions Moodle	
WTC resources overview	

General IT Introduction (before August) (IT Team)	
G-Mail account and 2 factor Auth, and sign in	
Email address in relevant groups	
Google Drive (the basics!)	
Google Calendar	
Google Meet (Video conferencing) and Zoom	
GDPR Training	
CDMS & Moodle Account set-up and confirm login	
Added to relevant WhatsApp groups	
Canned Content Recording and Training (2h at Residential) (Comms Team)	
Loom induction and training	
Training for Canned Content (CC)	
Confirm that the first CC lectures will be recorded at the first Resi they attend.	
Record first CC lecture(s)	
Faculty Day (Academic)	
'Prevent' training	
Training for VCs	
Meet Learning Development Tutor	
Understanding the role of Learning Development Tutor	
Students with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs) and disabilities	
Marking Training (week after first submission of essays) (Academic)	
Marking training	
Explain correct use of AMF and check understanding	