School of Religion
Ph.D. Handbook
2019–2020
Introduction

Welcome to the School of Religion where we continue a tradition of scholarship that goes back to the very foundation of Trinity College Dublin.

The School of Religion is one of the twelve Schools that comprise Trinity College's Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. It brings together biblical studies, theology, ethics, theory of religion, and international conflict and peace studies as independent but related disciplinary fields.

The School's undergraduate and postgraduate courses explore encounters between religions and cultures from their roots in antiquity to the present day. They investigate the intellectual and institutional resources developed in historical and current interactions and conflicts and apply them to the challenges and the opportunities societies face in an age of globalisation.

The School has a strong commitment to community engagement, has campuses in Belfast and Dublin and is home to the Loyola Institute, the Trinity Centre for Biblical Studies and the Irish School of Ecumenics.

This Handbook summarizes and supplements the regulations that are contained in the university Calendar. However, in the event of any conflict or inconsistency between the General regulations published in the university Calendar and information contained in programme or local handbooks, the provisions of the General Regulations in the Calendar will prevail.

Academic and administrative staff will be available at Orientation to explain most of these requirements, and to answer any queries that you may have about procedures and regulations.

An electronic copy of this Handbook will be available on the School of Religion/Course website with copies available via the Virtual Learning Environment (Blackboard). A hard copy of this handbook in large print is available in the School office. Alternative formats of the Handbook can be provided on request.
There may be some modification during the year to the procedures and regulations outlined below; these will be brought to your attention as they arise.

Please note:
Familiarize yourself with College’s regulations for postgraduate students. These are available in Part III of the Calendar.

Your @tcd.ie email account is the only e-mail address used for official College business. Consult this email account regularly.

Your personal data is kept in accordance with the Student Data Policy.

College regulations require that you remain resident in the Republic of Ireland, or in Northern Ireland, during the course of your studies. Periods of field work are permitted for research students. In extraordinary circumstances, on the particular academic merit of the proposed research project, it may be possible to avail of the University’s Remote Supervision Policy.
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1. COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS

1.1 M.Litt. (Masters by Research) - Master in Letters (M.Litt.)

A student registered for the degree of M.Litt. is required to carry out research in literature, language, philosophy, history, politics, economics, social sciences, psychology, education, geography or other cognate branch of learning. The minimum period of research before which a thesis can be submitted is one year from the date of registration, and the maximum period two years. In the case of part-time registration the minimum period of research before a thesis can be submitted is two years from the date of registration and the maximum period three years. A thesis submitted for an M.Litt. degree must show evidence of rigour and discrimination, appreciation of the relationship of the subject to a wider field of knowledge, and make some contribution to knowledge/scholarship (but it is not necessary that it be worthy of publication); it must be clear, concise, well written and orderly and must be a candidate’s own work. The Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) in consultation with the Supervisor nominates an external examiner and an internal examiner to the Dean of Graduate Studies (a standard nomination form is issued by the Graduate Studies Office). A viva is not held as a matter of course for an M.Litt., unless at the request of the examiners or the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate).

1.2 Ph.D.

According to the TCD College Calendar, a person who gains a Ph.D. will demonstrate:

- a systematic comprehension of a field of study and mastery of the skills and research methods associated with that field;
- that they have the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of scholarly research with integrity rigour and discrimination, which may involve the development of new skills, techniques, tools or methods;
- that they are capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas;
that they have made a significant contribution through original research which extends the frontiers of knowledge by producing a body of work some of which deserves publication in national and international refereed journals;

- that they can communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and society in general about their areas of expertise in a sustained and exact manner;

- that they can be expected to be able to promote, with due regard to ethical considerations, within academic contexts, scientific, technological, social or cultural advancement.

A Ph.D. within the School of Religion will correspond to these criteria. As we are a School within the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, the hallmarks of a Ph.D. are likely to be the mastery of a field, critical analysis of ideas and concepts, effective engagement with empirical and/or philosophical, theological or hermeneutical research methods, rigorous argument and originality.

2. Ph.D. Programme Details

2.1 Admission

Details of admission criteria can be found in the College Calendar, Part III. Candidates are normally required to possess a good honours degree (2.1 or 1st) or equivalent. Candidates with appropriate qualifications are normally admitted by the Dean of Graduate Studies directly to year 1 of the Ph.D. register on the recommendation of the applicant’s potential supervisor and the School’s Director of Teaching and Learning Postgraduate. It is also possible for candidates to be admitted, on academic grounds, to the M.Litt. register in year 1 with a view to transferring to the Ph.D. register within 18 months (procedures for this transfer are outlined below, see 3.5). Prior to submitting a formal application, students are advised to discuss their research proposal with a relevant member of academic staff. Such a person can be approached directly, or the Director of Teaching and Learning Postgraduate will be happy to advise you on whom to contact.

An M.Litt. or PhD proposal should be approximately 1500 words long incorporating:
• A statement of the research question/hypothesis
• A description of the proposed research and its relationship to existing research in the field
• A note on research methodology
• A preliminary structured bibliography
• A work plan

The application, proposal and supporting documentation should be submitted electronically through the Trinity applications portal. An academic committee within the departments takes decisions on the admissibility of applicants and the allocation of supervision. Most often successful candidates will be admitted straight on to the Ph.D. register, although in some cases an initial admission to the M.Litt. register will be suggested. Possible transfer to the Ph.D. register will be decided after 18 months at a transfer viva voce examination (see 3.5 below). After the decision to admit an applicant is taken, students will be informed via their my.tcd portal. Successful applicants then inform the Dean of Graduate Studies as to whether or not they intend to accept the offer. It should be noted that the Dean of Graduate Studies has the final decision on Ph.D. and M.Litt. admission.

2.2 Attendance and Residency

Normally, all graduate students should enter into residence in or near Dublin, or in the case of the School of Religion, in Belfast. In exceptional circumstances the Dean of Graduate Studies, after consultation with the graduate student’s Supervisor and/or appropriate Course Co-ordinators/Directors, may permit a graduate student to undertake a significant portion of the work for their degree or postgraduate diploma outside Dublin. Remote supervision is an arrangement which is granted in extraordinary circumstances on the particular academic merit of the proposed research project requiring the students to be in residence outside of Dublin/Belfast for more than 50% of their time on register. There must be an academic requirement, as opposed to a preference, to undertake the research abroad. For more information please see Trinity’s policy on remote supervision of research students.
2.3 Induction and Orientation

All students must register annually (in September or March corresponding to the month of first registration). Full information on registration procedures will be sent by Trinity. In September and March the School hosts orientation sessions to welcome all incoming graduate students. This provides students with an opportunity to meet with staff and other research students. Further details will be provided by the School. Trinity College holds an Orientation to the University for all incoming postgraduate students on the Friday afternoon before the first term and at the beginning of March on the Trinity campus. Induction sessions are offered in the library on the main Trinity campus. See the library website for details.

2.4 Supervision

College regulations concerning the role of supervisors and the provision of supervision can be found in the College Calendar Part III (see section 2).

Students are assigned a principal supervisor from within the staff of the School. In some cases, co-supervision will be arranged involving a second member of the School’s staff. It is possible for a co-supervisor to be appointed from another School within Trinity, although the member of staff within the School will be the principal supervisor. Students are expected to arrange to meet with their supervisors regularly to discuss research plans, conduct needs analyses, gain feedback on work in progress and devise a timetable for completion. At the end of each supervision session the supervisor writes a short report on the meeting which is agreed and co-signed by the student. Copies for the records are kept by the supervisor, student and executive officer. Once a year the student and supervisor should submit a progress report to the Graduate Studies Office. The template for this report can be found at Postgraduate Research Students section of the Graduate Studies website.
Some texts which may be of use to you in planning and executing your research include:


### 2.5 Research Seminars

The School will hold research seminars which are intended to help research students develop their work through peer review, academic discussion and research skills development. Specific details about research seminars will be made available to students in due course. At present, the following research skills seminars are available across College:

- Long Room Hub Arts and Humanities Research Institute
- Trinity Research in Social Sciences (TRiSS)
- Trinity Research Themes

Graduate Students interested in gaining experience of teaching by giving occasional lectures to undergraduate students should speak with their supervisor about opportunities.

### 2.6 Structured PhD and Credit Bearing Modules

Trinity PhD students are required to take modules bearing at least 10 ECTS over the course of their studies. Modules appropriate to a student’s field of study, research skills or career development should be identified by the student in consultation with their supervisor. These might be modules taken for assessment which are offered at MPhil level within the School or modules offered elsewhere in the University. Some of these are listed below.
2.7 Tangent: Trinity’s Ideas Workspace

Tangent, Trinity’s Ideas Workspace offers a range of postgraduate education and certificate options in, Creative Thinking, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship.

Whether you're a researcher, aspiring entrepreneur or jobseeker, our postgraduate programmes are designed to develop the core competencies of collaboration, communication, leadership invaluable to any future career.

For postgraduate education options at Tangent.

2.8 Centre for Academic Practice and Student Learning (CAPSL)

CAPSL offers several workshops and resources to support PG Teaching Assistants, including a module (5 ECTS) which exposes postgraduates to the educational discourses on teaching and learning at university level. Visit the CAPSL website for more information.

3. COURSEWORK ASSESSMENT

3.1 Probation, Progress and Continuation on the Ph.D. register

As outlined in the College Calendar, continuing registration is dependent upon satisfactory progress. The Director of Teaching and Learning Postgraduate is responsible for ensuring through annual consultation with supervisors that students are progressing satisfactorily according to the required standard and norms of their particular degree. Not later than 18 months after first registration, students on the Ph.D. register are required to undertake an internal viva within the School to confirm their position on the Ph.D. register. Students wishing to transfer from the M.Litt. to the Ph.D. register must also undertake a transfer viva.

The DTLPG has the role of appointing at least one reader and a chair for this viva. The student’s supervisor(s) may attend as an observer. The student prepares a written
submission for the viva incorporating at least one chapter from the thesis and an overview of the thesis as a whole (including the proposed chapter structure). At the exam the student presents her or his work to the panel and is questioned on it. If the candidate’s work is judged to meet the criteria for a Ph.D. described above (point 2) the DTLPG submits a form to GSO requesting the student’s confirmation on the register. If unsuccessful, a student is (1) given the opportunity to resubmit work to the panel (2) advised to submit a thesis for an M.Litt. or (3) advised not to continue postgraduate study. Students wishing to appeal the outcome of the viva may do so using the Appeals process outlined below (3.9).

### 3.2 Requests for Extensions

The College Calendar outlines the extenuating circumstances in which a student’s supervisor can apply to the Dean of Graduate Studies for an extension on a student’s behalf. See [College Calendar, Part III](#) under section II – Attendance, Part-time Registration, Extensions and Off Books). Doctoral students should aim to complete their studies within 4 years and M.Litt. students within 2 years. Six months prior to the end of the final year the student should liaise with their supervisor about a timetable for completion. The School’s DTLPG should be kept informed as to the intended timetable for completion.

### 3.3 Procedure for Examination

Procedures governing the submission and examination of theses are found in the College Calendar at [Calendar, Part III](#) see under Section II – Procedure for Examination of a Candidate. The thesis produced by a Ph.D. candidate is wholly their own work, which they are prepared to defend in all integrity. Therefore, submission of a thesis is done entirely at the discretion of the student. Students lodge two soft bound copies of their thesis with the Graduate Studies Office by the required date. The GSO sends a form for the nomination of external and internal examiners to the DTLPG. It is possible for this form to be completed in advance of submission or on submission. The DTLPG liaises with the student’s supervisor to nominate the examiners. The nominations are then sent to the Dean for approval. The viva
is normally held within 8 weeks of the receipt of the thesis by the examiners. The Chair for the viva is the DTLPG or her/his nominee. Supervisor(s) may attend as observers. During the viva students have the opportunity to present their work to the examiners before taking questions. The examiners will then come to a decision.

The possible outcomes of a Ph.D. viva are recommendations for:

- award of the degree of Ph.D.
- award of the degree subject to minor revisions
- award of the degree subject to major revisions
- award of a lower degree
- fail

An M.Litt. is also examined by an external and internal examiner. A viva is not held as a matter of course, unless at the request of the examiners or the DTLPG.

3.4 Research Ethics

The School’s research community takes great care to ensure that our research activities follow best ethical practice in their design, content and conduct. Staff and students are required to follow College policies and maintain appropriate ethical standards in their research, and especially in any research involving human subjects. The School’s Research Ethics Webpage includes all up to date information on Trinity’s ethics policies, processes for applying for ethical approval, and other references. The School’s Checklist (below) may aid you in determining the level of Research Ethics oversight appropriate to your project. If you answer ‘yes’ to any of the questions, then your application falls into the category of moderate to high risk and requires Level 2 clearance; you must apply for Ethical Approval from the Art, Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty Research Ethics Committee. If you do not answer ‘yes’ to any of these questions, then you may apply to the School’s Research Ethics Committee to either secure Level 1 clearance or approval to proceed with your project.
Although the Research Ethics Committees meet regularly to consider applications for research ethics clearance, if you think you will need clearance the sooner that you submit your proposal the better.

**Checklist:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does your research/ project involve:</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A survey asking questions of a sensitive or private nature</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. A questionnaire or observational studies involving children or vulnerable adults.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Research where there is a risk of a participant feeling undue pressure to participate by virtue of his/her relationship with the researcher (e.g. student/supervisor; patient/clinician).</td>
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<td>4. A project involving a justifiable degree of deception.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Analysis of archival irrevocably anonymised human tissue samples for which consent for research was not originally given, and was not acquired in the course of clinical treatment. (Archived samples taken for a previous research study must always get new ethical approval).</td>
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<td>6. Research involving invasive procedures.</td>
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<td>7. Research involving vulnerable persons.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Research where identifiable information obtained may have legal, economic or social consequences for research subjects.</td>
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<td>9. Research that may identify illegal activity</td>
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<td>10. A project where each subject is paid (over and above token gestures).</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Research that may potentially endanger the subjects, and/or researchers, and/or 3rd parties, and/or the environment.</td>
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<td>12. Research involving the collection of human tissue.</td>
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<td>13. Research that may have a direct military role.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Potentially harmful research involving humans conducted outside Ireland.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Research involving psychological intervention.</td>
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3.5 Plagiarism

To ensure that you have a clear understanding of what plagiarism is, how Trinity deals with cases of plagiarism, and how to avoid it, you will find a repository of information on the library website.

Please:

(i) Visit the online resources to inform yourself about how Trinity deals with plagiarism and how you can avoid it. You should also familiarize yourself with the 2019-20 Calendar entry on plagiarism located on this website and the sanctions which are applied. See Calendar Part III, Section I – Plagiarism.

(ii) Complete the ‘Ready, Steady, Write’ online tutorial on plagiarism. Completing the tutorial is compulsory for all students.

(iii) Familiarise yourself with the declaration that you will be asked to sign when submitting course work.

(iv) Contact your supervisor if you are unsure about any aspect of plagiarism.

3.6 Postgraduate Appeals Process

Postgraduate Appeals at School level: Research Students

Where a transfer/confirmation viva has been held and has determined that a student may not transfer to, or be confirmed on, the PhD register, the student may appeal to the School Appeals Committee (Research Students). The grounds for appeal should be clearly stated and supported where necessary by documentary evidence. The Director of Teaching and Learning Postgraduate will convene and chair this committee composed of one Head of Discipline (not the student’s Discipline) and one other academic staff member. At the Appeals Committee the student concerned should have representation appropriate to the
formality of the process, for example, a supervisor, Course Co-ordinator or other appropriate staff member. No one is appointed to an Appeals Committee where a conflict of interest might arise. Should the DTLPG experience a conflict of interest, she or he will be substituted by the Head of School. Appeals against the decision of a School Appeals Committee (Research Students) may be made in writing to the Dean of Graduate Studies, who has the discretion to grant or deny the appeal. Appeals against the decision of the Dean of Graduate Studies may be brought to the Academic Appeals Committee for Graduate Students (Research). This committee will consider appeals concerning events occurring more than 4 months previously only in the most exceptional circumstances.

**Appeals against the decision of the examiners of a research thesis**

Where a viva voce of a thesis has been held and the thesis referred back for extensive revision, or the award of a lower degree, or outright failure is recommended, the Dean of Graduate Studies informs the candidate of the verdict. If the candidate wishes to appeal the examiners’ decision, she or he must apply in writing to the Dean of Graduate Studies, who has the discretion to grant or deny the appeal. The grounds for appeal should be clearly stated and supported where necessary by documentary evidence. If the Dean of Graduate Studies denies the appeal, the student may appeal to the Academic Appeals Committee for Graduate Students (Research). This committee will consider appeals concerning events occurring more than 4 months previously only in the most exceptional circumstances. The Postgraduate Appeals Process is outlined in the [Calendar Part III Section 1 – Appeals Process for Graduate Students](#). All appeals should be heard first at School level.

**3.7 Links to Key University Policies**

- [Academic policies](#)
- [Student complaints](#)
- [Dignity and Respect Policy](#)
- [Data protection](#)
4. STUDENT SUPPORTS SERVICES

There are a range of services to turn to for advice and support should you need it at any stage of your studies. The main services are outlined below, and you will receive more information on what the various services provide at orientation. For a general list of all Student Support Services, and to download the latest handbook, visit the Student Support Services website.

Belfast students can find further information on how to access Student Support Services as well as a Healthcare factsheet on the Belfast Campus International Students page.

4.1 College Disability Service

The School welcomes applications from prospective students with disabilities, and endeavours to assist all students to realise their potential by offering a range of supports that include reasonable accommodations. The Disability Service in Trinity College Dublin provides advice and support to students who disclose their disability prior to entry and whilst studying in College. Students with disabilities are encouraged to attend the College Open Day – usually in early December of the year preceding entry, or to contact the Disability Service to arrange a visit. We also encourage students with disabilities to register with the Disability Service at the beginning of the academic year in order to seek supports and facilitate participation in their course. Students who do not disclose a disability cannot avail of reasonable accommodations and cannot claim that they have been discriminated against (on grounds of disability), if they have not disclosed a disability. For further information, or to discuss the supports that are available please contact the Disability Service at askds@tcd.ie or visit the Disability Services website.

4.2 Postgraduate Advisory Service

The Postgraduate Advisory Service, commonly referred to as PAS, is the frontline support for postgraduate students at Trinity. PAS is coordinated by the Postgraduate Student Support Officer who acts as a first point of contact for any postgraduate student needing support or guidance.
How we can help

We are here to provide support on any matter that may impact upon your time as a postgraduate at Trinity. Some of the most common issues students come to PAS to discuss include: study-related stress or worry; concerns about academic progress; supervisor-relationship concerns; extensions and going off-books; queries regarding regulations and academic appeals; bullying; plagiarism and disciplinary cases and financial hardship.

We support students by:

- Providing frontline confidential and free support, information, and referral via the Postgraduate Student Support Officer
- Providing, on referral, named academics to provide advice, advocacy, and assistance via a panel of Postgraduate Advisors
- Providing a suite of complementary supports including informal mediation, workshops and training to postgraduates
- Administering the Postgraduate Student Assistance Fund and other financial assistance to postgraduate students.
- PAS also provides representation for postgraduates in the event of disciplinary and/or academic appeals.

PAS is located on the ground floor of House 27. We’re open from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. Appointments are available from 10am to 3pm. If in doubt get in touch!

Financial Assistance

The Postgraduate Advisory Service administers the Postgraduate Student Assistance Fund. This fund is intended to tackle disadvantage by providing small amounts of financial assistance to students requiring additional support to enable them to fully benefit from their third-level studies. It is co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Social Fund as part of the ESF Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020. For further details see the financial assistance information on the PAS website.
4.3 Graduate Students’ Union

Located on the second floor of House Six, the Graduate Students’ Union is an independent body within College that represents postgraduate students throughout College. Upon registration, all postgraduates are automatically members. It is run by two full-time sabbatical officers. The President is the head and public face of the Union, and is responsible for strategy and policy formulation, whilst sitting on a wide range of committees. The Vice-President is also the Union’s Education and Welfare Officer and advises students on matters such as academic appeals and supervisor relationships. S/He is also here to help on more personal matters, such as financial concerns, illness and bereavement. Any discussions about such concerns are treated with the strictest confidence. The GSU website provides the latest updates from the Union, information on elections, campaigns and connections to the Union’s social media platforms. Students can arrange meetings with the sabbatical officers via emailing either the GSU President at president@tcdgsu.ie or the GSU Vice-President at vicepresident@tcdgsu.ie or by contacting the office landline at +353 1 896 1169.

Another useful contact for research students is the GSU Research Student Officer who can be contacted at phd@tcdgsu.ie. The GSU help organise elections for class and School Reps. The class reps report to their School Rep who attends the School Executive Committee meetings and represents the whole school in the GSU. The class rep in Belfast also attends the monthly staff meetings.

4.4 Careers
Students can make an appointment with a Careers Advisor through MyCareer. To avail of this service please login to MyCareer with your Trinity student name and password, update your profile and you can then book an appointment. The address of the School’s Careers Advisor, Orlaith Tunney, is tunneyo@tcd.ie. Students may also wish to avail of the following online resources: Careers Service website, overview of careers resources for postgraduate taught students, and the Trinity LinkedIn Alumni Tool.

4.5 Clubs and Societies

We hope you will take the opportunity to enjoy your time beyond the classroom and participate in university life as fully as possible. You can find a list of clubs and societies here: Trinity Societies and Trinity Sports Centre. Belfast based students can join clubs and societies run by the nearby Queen’s University Students Union and are provided with membership of the Queen’s Sports Centre (PEC) thanks to an arrangement set up by the GSU and Trinity Sport.

4.6 Emergency Procedures

In the event of an emergency, dial Security Services on extension 1999. Security Services provide a 24-hour service to the college community, 365 days a year. They are the liaison to the Fire, Garda and Ambulance services and all staff and students are advised to always telephone extension 1999 (+353 1 896 1999) in case of an emergency. Should you require any emergency or rescue services on campus, you must contact Security Services. This includes chemical spills, personal injury or first aid assistance. Belfast students will be provided with separate emergency information at orientation. It is recommended that all students save at least one emergency contact in their phone under ICE (In Case of Emergency).

4.7 Health and Safety
Please try to ensure you use equipment and facilities in a way that protects your own and others’ health and safety. Report any faults to a member of staff rather than trying to fix equipment yourself. Further details applicable to the Dublin and Belfast sites will be provided at the start of term.

4.8 Key Locations

In Dublin, we are on the main Trinity Campus. The building is located beside the Department of Zoology. View our Dublin location and get driving/walking directions here. In Belfast, we are located at Edgehill House, 9 Lennoxvale, Belfast BT9 5BY. View our Belfast location and get driving/walking directions here.

4.8 Contacts and Opening Hours

Head of School – Prof. Siobhán Garrigan (currently on Research Leave)
garrigs@tcd.ie
353 (0)1 896 4794

Acting Head of School, 2019-20 – Prof. David Shepherd
shepherd@tcd.ie
+353 1896 4796

Director of Teaching and Learning Postgraduate – Prof. Carlo Aldrovandi
aldrovac@tcd.ie
+353 (0) 1896 4783

School Administration Manager – Aideen Woods
aidwoods@tcd.ie
+353 (0)1 896 4778

Postgraduate Officer – Helen Murphy
srpostgrad@tcd.ie
+353 (0)1 8974792
**Belfast Campus**

**Prof. David Mitchell**
+44(0)28 9037 3989
damitche@tcd.ie

**Prof. Brendan Ciaran Browne**
brbrowne@tcd.ie
+44(0)28 9037 3988

**Senior Executive Officer – Caroline Clarke**
cclarke4@tcd.ie
Tel: +44(0)28 9077 0087 (mornings)

**Librarian – Brid O’Brien**
brid.obrien@tcd.ie
+44(0)28 9037 3980

For the full list of all academic and administrative staff please visit the School of Religion [website](#).

Opening hours of School offices are normally 9.00am – 5.30pm. You will be notified of any changes to this via your student email account.