



# Master of Arts in Aquinas Studies

Level 9 (NFQ)

POSTGRADUATE



**THE PRIORY INSTITUTE**  
A Dominican Centre for Theological Studies

# AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Master of Arts in Aquinas Studies provides:

- a study of the philosophical and theological thought of St Thomas Aquinas at postgraduate level by engaging with primary sources as well as historical and contemporary scholarship on Aquinas' thought;
- an exploration of the historical, contextual and linguistic background to Aquinas' thought;
- study of the relationship between faith and reason in Aquinas, noting the cross-cultural character of his thought in this area, which is still relevant today;
- an opportunity to contribute meaningfully to philosophical and theological scholarship on the thought of Thomas Aquinas.

## Year 1

### SEMESTER 1

#### 1. Research Methods for Aquinas Studies (5 ECTS)

This module provides students with the tools to undertake research and writing at postgraduate level. The module will also familiarise students with dissertation guidelines.

#### 2. Introduction to Latin for Reading St Thomas Aquinas (5 ECTS)

The purpose of this module is to give students a basic competence in Latin in order to read St Thomas with particular focus on his *Summa Theologiae*; it will enable a basic level of translation from Latin into English and allow students to read scholarly articles and books that refer to Aquinas' texts and vocabulary in the original Latin.

#### 3. Introduction to Thomas Aquinas: Life, Thought and Historical Context (10 ECTS)

This module introduces students to the life and work of St Thomas Aquinas. It explains the historical background and context of Aquinas' major works, examining his use of Scripture and the influences of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, the Church Fathers, Peter Lombard, and the Islamic philosophers. It will also explore the impact of Aquinas' thought on later Catholic philosophy and theology, and will evaluate the different understandings of Thomism.

### SEMESTER 2

#### 4. Thinking and Talking about God (10 ECTS)

This module examines Aquinas' thinking and writing on the nature of God. It does so with an emphasis on the Prima Pars of the *Summa Theologiae*, qq. 1-26, with a particular focus on qq 2-13. which consider the existence of God and the divine attributes such as simplicity, perfection, goodness, infinity, the existence of God in things, immutability, eternity, unity, the names of God and how God is known by us.

#### 5. Happiness and the Virtuous Life (10 ECTS)

This module explores life in its fullest sense from Aristotle's understanding of human flourishing to St Thomas Aquinas' doctrine of beatitude. It examines whether human beings have a natural desire to see God, and how this differs from the operations of faith, hope and charity. It reflects on the operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the new law of the Gospel, and the flowering of the Christian life. It also explores how these relate to the practical work of the cardinal virtues.



# Year 2

## SEMESTER 3

*Students choose two elective modules from the following four options, thereby selecting either a more theological or philosophical focus.*

### • Metaphysics (10 ECTS)

This module introduces students to Aquinas' philosophical thought on metaphysics, examining key ideas such as substance, essence, existence, causality, actuality, potentiality, form and matter (hylomorphism). It assesses Aquinas' metaphysics in relation to Aristotle, later Greek philosophy and the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius.

### • Philosophical Anthropology in Aquinas (10 ECTS)

The primary aim of this module is to provide a comprehensive exploration of Aquinas' anthropology, through close reference to the primary texts of Aquinas as well as secondary resources. The module will include a detailed analysis of Aquinas' understanding of the following: human nature, the soul and body and their unity; the powers of the soul, especially intellect and will; the theory of knowledge, and the freedom of the will; and the meaning of the term person as applied to the human being. In addition, the module has two further aims:

- 1) to provide an overview of the Aristotelian roots of Aquinas' anthropology;
- 2) to provide an overview of contemporary developments in Thomistic anthropology.

### • Trinity and Creation (10 ECTS)

This module explores Aquinas' understanding of the Triune God with particular reference to the *Summa Theologiae*, ST I, qq. 27-43. In doing so, it makes continual reference to the conciliar and patristic background of Aquinas' understanding of the Trinity. The module highlights the Trinitarian structure of Aquinas' theology of creation and divine action in the world (ST I, qq. 44-49). It also engages with contemporary criticism of Thomas' work on the Trinity and creation. Broader theological themes are discussed as they arise, including the relationships between the Magisterium and theological speculation, faith and reason, and Scripture and theology.

### • Christ and Sacraments (10 ECTS)

This module introduces students to the Third Part of St Thomas's *Summa Theologiae*. The explicit Christology of the Third Part of the *Summa* argues how, in Jesus Christ, the divine and the human are united in the person of the Word (Hypostatic Union), how the authentic humanity of Christ expresses itself in unique forms of grace, knowledge and power, making Christ the definitive mediator between God and the human race, and how this saving mediation is exercised soteriologically in the events of his life. The module will conclude by examining how these mysteries of Christ are forever present and active in the sacraments that he gave to his Church, and particularly in Baptism and Eucharist with reference to the relevant sections of the *Summa*.

## SEMESTER 4

MA in Aquinas Studies Dissertation (30 ECTS)



## Course Overview

This MA in Aquinas Studies by blended learning is particularly suitable for those who cannot attend classes regularly. The modules are delivered by suitably qualified and experienced theologians and philosophers who are specialists in their disciplines. The MA provides an excellent foundation for further studies, teaching and pastoral work.

*An option exists to exit with a Graduate Diploma in Arts in Aquinas Studies.*

## Assessment

There is a taught component consisting of eight modules (60 credits in total) delivered over three semesters of 15 weeks each. A dissertation of 15,000 words (30 credits) is completed in the fourth semester.

## Course Duration

Two years (part-time)

## Course Delivery

Delivery is through blended learning (a combination of onsite and online learning). Attendance at two onsite weekends in each of semesters 1, 2 and 3 is required.

## Validation

The MA in Aquinas Studies is validated by Technological University Dublin and is aligned with the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

## Admission Requirements

The degree is suitable for students with a Level 8 (honours) degree in which theology or philosophy is a major component. Candidates must have obtained at least a second class honours degree. An interview will normally be part of the selection process. Not all candidates with the minimum requirements will be automatically accepted.

## Fees

Fees are payable at the beginning of the first semester for the forthcoming year and at the beginning of the third semester for the second year. An instalment payment plan is available.

**The total fee is €4,995**

Application Fee	€40
Year One	€3,170
Year Two	€1,785

## Applications

This course will next be offered in September 2020.

## Further Information

The Priory Institute is a centre for theological, biblical and philosophical studies, established by the Irish Province of the Dominican Order and is Catholic and ecumenical in its approach. It seeks to engage with the best thinking of our times and brings the insights of different philosophical and religious thinkers to bear on the study of theology and religious studies.

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