

Ministers of Word and Sacrament

The core of students at Westminster are preparing for ordination to the **Ministry of Word and Sacraments of the URC**. Students on formal qualifications come from diverse backgrounds; some have much academic experience, many feel they have little. We delight in working with care and time with everyone and we aim to find a course to suit individual student needs.

We teach courses through the universities of Cambridge, Durham and Anglia Ruskin

We are able to offer both residential and non-residential forms of training, for those who are able to move to Cambridge, and those who need to stay in their local context for the duration of their formation for ministry.

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Contextual Theology and Placements

Education for ministry has a strong focus on personal development – connecting the experience and insight students have and will gain, with the deepened understanding of the ways of God that reflection and learning can offer.

We take seriously the Church's calling to mission, to serve God and make Christ known among our neighbours. Theology involves an understanding of human community, and an imaginative vision of God's varied ways of working in the world. Through a variety of placements the college works to integrate

practical experience and theological study. Placements are a growing part of our courses for all students. We aim to hold together the insights that come from working with people in church and community with the wisdom gained from reading and from teachers, from seminars and classes, discussions and writing.

Most students on residential courses at Westminster are expected to undertake a regular Sunday church attachment, and major blocks of placement in the vacations each year, leading up to a year of placement in a congregation through our Living Ministry Programme. Students on the block-week degree course (coming to Westminster 4-6 times a year) will be based in their local context for training, and will undertake placements in a variety of different contexts according to their location and experience ahead of their Living Ministry Placement.

Living Ministry Programme

All URC candidates preparing for ordination, and often students at Westminster from other traditions, complete the Living Ministry Programme (LMP) in addition to any academic awards. The LMP involves nine months spent in a pastorate local to where a student lives, under the supervision of a local minister, with four block weeks across the year based back at college for reflection, support and learning. The LMP is an on-going exploration of the practice and context of ministry and mission.

Rooted in worship

Every working day in Westminster includes, for those in Cambridge, two short times of worship, led by a student or staff member. Prayer is at the heart of each day and meeting with God together is the heart of our life as a Christian community. In 2017 we introduced new patterns of shared spiritual life including Bible study and the celebration of the Lord's Supper shared by students and teachers. We also enjoy worship within the Federation during term, so that we discover the breadth of the ecumenical church at prayer. In discussion with staff and students, we are looking at ways to enable off-campus students to be part of the regular cycle of worship and prayer, including uploading worship resources to our website.

Personal support

Westminster has five full time teaching staff – all specialist teachers and committed to the church’s ministry, and all involved in the wider life of the United Reformed Church. In addition we have another full time member of the tutorial team whose work is devoted to building up our wider URC resource and teaching roles and responding to the needs of the denomination as they continue to evolve. The college also has an experienced URC minister as its Chaplain who is available to all students and staff and whose conversations play no part in any assessment processes. So the college offers the kind of personal support and care that can help students develop their strengths and confidence for ministry. Many student spouses, partners, families and friends play an active part in the life of college. We try to ensure that the social life of the college adapts itself to the changing makeup of the student community each year.

Where will you live?

Where you live will depend upon your family circumstances and the course that is best for you. There are many and varied patterns among our students. Some students come to Westminster from Monday to Friday during term time periods and occupy one of our single residential rooms (all en suite), but return to home and family at the weekends and in ‘vacation’ periods. In such cases church placements can be arranged near home. This pattern gives an opportunity to participate in the community life of Westminster, Federation and Cambridge while also keeping home life going.



Some students, on full or part-time programmes, commute as they need to from home, staying overnight in Cambridge as necessary. Those on the Durham Common Awards block-week courses will come and stay at Westminster for 4-6 weeks a year, with dates set well in advance.

Some students move to Cambridge for the whole period of their education for ministry. Westminster works with students and the URC to offer appropriate accommodation in flats or rented houses locally. Some flats are available on the college site. The flats on the Westminster site have been recently refurbished'.

What Our Students Say

This is what one of our current students has to share about his experiences of being here at Westminster:

“I’m a third year student training for ministry and researching transgender theologies of personhood. It would be hard to sum up my time at Westminster in a few short sentences, so here are some words! Welcome, hospitality, difference, diversity, traditional, contemporary, practical, academic, open, learning, conversation, food, cake, coffee, pubs, friendship, discipleship, disagreement, support, debate, love, reformed, reforming, future-oriented, optimistic, realistic, genuine, truthful, contextual, centred, interesting, welcome.” (Alex Clare-Young)