

Student Best Practices for a Context-Driven Approach to Theological Education



The Faculty of Theology at Huron is committed to providing an excellent theological education through contextually relevant course content which is accessible from anywhere in Canada. In keeping with our commitment to the vocational and academic development of students in our degree programs, courses in our Master of Theological Studies (MTS) and Master of Divinity (MDiv) are designed to be completed entirely online (within Canada), for students unable to attend class in person at our London campus.

In our hybrid classrooms, students interact with each other and their professors from across the country, situating their learning and formation in their home contexts. Through our **Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs)**, students can seamlessly access lectures in real time just as they would by walking right into a classroom on campus. All academic services offered by Huron University are equally available to all students regardless of how they access our courses.

Part of [Huron's Distinct Advantage](#) is our culture of care. Although there are unique challenges to pursuing a masters-level degree online, the Faculty of Theology will get to know you personally and support you in your theological education, whether you are preparing for ministry, service, or further study. Even if you are a student living outside of London, Ontario, you are still connected to our vibrant community of scholars and students outside of the classroom through our Community Lunches, Chapel Services, Wednesday Gatherings, and student-led events. All students are welcomed and encouraged to join us for any lecture or event held on-campus.

Beginning Fall 2022, students admitted to the MTS and MDiv programs are required to attend on-campus three-day "Intensive" sessions to be held annually in early fall and late spring. MDiv students are required to attend three (3) of these sessions over the course of their degree, and MTS students are required to attend two (2). During these three-day Intensives, new and returning students meet faculty members, develop new relationships within our interfaith community by sharing meals and prayer, tour Huron's campus, and participate in exciting recreational activities in London. Nearby accommodations for these retreats are available, with both travel and accommodations partially subsidized by the Faculty of Theology.

Our Expectations for Participation in Our Hybrid Courses

The two main platforms Huron uses to create our VLEs are **OWL**, Western University's Learning Management System, and the videoconferencing tool **Zoom**. Professors use **OWL** as an **online course resource** to post course outlines, forums, important announcements, accept and return assignments, as well as provide access to online classes via Zoom. The Faculty of Theology at Huron uses **Zoom** to **host synchronous lectures** and other important events. Students are expected to become familiar with the Zoom and OWL interfaces and functions, to ensure problem-free access to course materials and lectures.

All students must be pre-approved by the Dean of Theology to participate in their classes by Zoom.

Please also inform your instructor before classes begin. Students not approved for distance study may only attend class by Zoom with prior approval from the Dean and/or Course Instructor and only in situations (e.g., personal situation, inclement weather) that render attendance in-person absolutely impossible.

- To activate your Zoom account through Western’s services, view tutorials here: <https://wts.uwo.ca/zoom/index.html>.
- When you follow an invitation link to Zoom from your Course Instructor, the link should open Zoom with a single-sign-on (SSO) option. Choose the SSO option and enter “westernuniversity” to input your Western credentials and log into your class.
- Students or faculty encountering difficulties with their Western ID, login, OWL, or other Western access should consult: https://wts.uwo.ca/get_help/index.html.

So that the Faculty of Theology can provide all students with the same quality of classroom content and remain committed to your goals, we ask that all Huron VLE students adhere to the following requirements.

Technology

- Successful Huron VLE students have access to:
 - ✓ A secure, reliable high-speed internet connection, on- or off-campus
 - ✓ High-quality audio and video through a desktop, laptop, tablet, or phone to participate actively in synchronous lectures
 - i.e., headphones with a built-in microphone; a webcam with integrated microphone technology
 - ✓ Additional support for technology is available by contacting the [Huron Help Desk](#)

[Library and Learning Services at Huron](#) offers a same-day [Technology and Wellness Lending](#) service that is available to all current on-campus students, including non-degree students.

Huron Classroom Conduct

- All students at Huron:
 - ✓ Are self-motivated, self-disciplined, and independent learners
 - ✓ Come to class prepared to engage fully in class discussions
 - ✓ Have access to a quiet study space at home or in their community
 - ✓ Devote at least 8 hours per week to each course
 - ✓ Respect the opinions of your colleagues even when they appear different
- Zoom Etiquette:
 - ✓ Log-in early to check video and audio levels.
 - ✓ Turn unnecessary notifications off or limit them (see “focus-assist” on Windows, “Do Not Disturb” on Macbooks, etc.).
 - ✓ Before class starts, please alert your instructor to any circumstances that prevent you from turning your camera on.
 - ✓ Leave your camera on unless you need to briefly step away from your device.
 - ✓ Stay on “mute” when your colleagues and professors are speaking during class time.

- ✓ Consider using the “Raise Hand” function on Zoom to ask a question.
- ✓ Minimize other distractions and avoid unintentional disclosure of private spaces. Consider using:
 - A virtual background – see help here: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/210707503-Virtual-Background>
 - A profile photo – see help here: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201363203-Customizing-your-Profile>
 - Your display name – this can be changed and should reflect how you prefer to be addressed. Pronouns can also be added.
- ✓ Use “Reactions” and “Emojis” with tact.
- ✓ The “Chat” function should be used with discretion as it is not private. Refrain from sharing confidential information in the Chat. Ensure you are selecting the appropriate audience or person when sending your message.
- ✓ There are times when you or your VLE colleagues might require additional time and space to prepare for discussions between Zoom and in-class. Please be patient.

Accessible Learning and Academic Accommodation

- Please write to Sandra Rice, Assistant to the Dean of Theology (srice@uwo.ca), to inquire about opportunities for accessible learning. Requests for academic consideration on medical or compassionate grounds must be approved by the Dean and may require documentation. Be in touch with your Course Instructor if you cannot meet a deadline or attend a class.
- Huron’s [Writing & Learning Services](#) at Huron University are available to all students. More information about their inter-library loan services and online support resources can be found here: <https://huronatwestern.ca/library/study-and-learning-guide/>
- Additional resources can be found here: http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/academic_accomodation.html