Our vision for growth

Forming leaders for a lifetime of faithful ministry



OAK HILL COLLEGE

Our Purpose

To see the church flourish

Our Approach

Serving the church

The church is central to God's purposes for the world. We partner with churches to equip men and women for faithful ministry in diverse contexts across the UK and globally.

Rooted in Scripture

We believe Scripture is God-breathed and central to Christian ministry. Students are trained to read the Bible carefully, faithfully, and deeply — including the opportunity to study the biblical languages in an accessible and supportive environment.

Formed through theology

We believe deep and rigorous theology forms wise, resilient, and faithful gospel workers. Biblical, systematic, historical, and practical theology are integrated throughout our training.

Nurtured in community

Lasting formation cannot be rushed. Students grow together through shared learning, prayer, friendship, and service — in a community that shapes both character and conviction.

United in Christ

We welcome students from a wide range of evangelical denominations and traditions. United by shared gospel convictions, we seek to learn from one another with humility, charity, and love for Christ.

Our goal (2024-2028)

By 2028, we aim to be training 500 people each year for ongoing and initial ministry across our programmes.

Principal's Message



The churches our children and grandchildren inherit will be shaped, in part, by the leaders being formed today. Churches need leaders who can teach Scripture faithfully, care for people wisely, and serve with courage, humility, and love in an increasingly complex world.

We believe that developing that kind of faithful leadership cannot be rushed. Deep theological education plays a vital role in forming pastors and leaders who know Christ deeply, love his church, and are equipped for a lifetime of faithful ministry. That conviction shapes everything we do at Oak Hill - it takes time to thrive.

A plaque in our chapel captures something of our heart. It simply reads: "We would see Jesus."

Those words express the aim of all we do. We want students not only to understand Scripture more deeply, but to know Christ more fully and become more like him.

In a culture of speed and constant distraction, Oak Hill creates space for deep learning, careful reflection, spiritual growth, and lasting friendships. Whether on campus or online, students are shaped within a rich learning community that prepares them to serve churches, workplaces, and wider society.

The effect of this model is seen in our students and the impact they, and our faculty, have on the wider global church. In the last 10 years, 80% of our 350 graduates have gone on to full-time Christian ministry, with many others serving in churches, parachurches, and wider society in significant ways. Additionally around 40% of those teaching at conservative evangelical theological colleges and training institutions in England and Wales were trained at Oak Hill. Oak Hill's faculty and alumni also continue to write award-winning books, serving the whole church with their expertise.

I continue to be grateful to the Lord for the privilege of serving as Principal of Oak Hill, and for the opportunity to partner with you in this vital work. Thank you so much for your encouragement, your prayers, and your ongoing partnership in the gospel. We hope this booklet encourages you, helps you pray for theological education, and gives you a clearer sense of the vital role it plays in the future of the church.

James Robson
Principal

The Current Landscape

"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few..."

Matthew 9:37–38

Encouraging Signs of Growth

There are many encouraging signs of gospel growth across the UK and globally. Churches within various networks continue to grow, while diaspora churches and new church plants are reaching communities in fresh and significant ways.

Yet alongside these encouraging developments, theological education faces real challenges. A May 2024 report by 9:38 highlighted a growing concern: while interest in Christianity appears to be increasing, fewer people are entering training for full-time gospel ministry. Recent figures from the Church of England reflect this trend, with a significant decline in ordinands since 2020.



"Ministry in diaspora contexts can be very people-driven. But we must also be deeply rooted in Scripture. That's why theological training matters—it helps us serve biblically and faithfully."

Benson Lai
Student

Changing Patterns of Training

The reasons are varied and complex. Financial pressures, anxiety about leading in today's culture, and difficult experiences within ministry all shape how people think about training and leadership. Many students are also now exploring ministry later in life, often alongside family responsibilities, employment, and existing church commitments.

At the same time, theological education itself is changing rapidly. Online and hybrid learning have expanded significantly over the past fifteen years, creating opportunities for students to remain rooted in local churches and ministry contexts while studying.

This flexibility has increased accessibility for many, including bivocational leaders and students from diverse cultural and geographical backgrounds.

We have seen this change ourselves, with a 166% increase in interest in part-time programmes since 2020 and students now studying with us from locations across the UK and internationally.

> "A medical doctor does not begin with public confidence but with long study. They must learn all they do carefully because lives are at stake. A careless doctor will harm bodies, just the same way a careless preacher will harm consciences, faith and eternal hope."
>
> **Bishop Tim Wambunya**
> Bishop of Wolverhampton and former Oak Hill student

Depth Still Matters

These developments bring genuine opportunities, but also important questions. Accessibility and flexibility matter deeply. Yet theological formation is about more than convenience alone.

Faithful ministry requires depth, wisdom, spiritual maturity, and relationships that are often formed slowly over time and in community.

The challenge facing theological colleges today is not simply how to make training more accessible, but how to do so while preserving the depth and formation needed for a lifetime of faithful ministry.



Oak Hill today



Responding with Innovation and Flexibility

Since September 2024, under new leadership, Oak Hill has been developing a clear strategic vision for growth - rooted in our theological convictions and shaped by the changing needs of the church.

We are seeking to respond wisely to today's landscape: widening access to theological education, increasing flexibility, and serving a broader range of students, while continuing to contend for the depth and rigour needed for long-term faithful ministry.



Flexible Pathways for Ministry Formation

Patterns of ministry and theological training are changing. In response, Oak Hill has expanded flexibility across its undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, including some online learning and new part-time pathways.

Significant investment in teaching technology also now enables students studying remotely to participate fully in classroom learning without highly compromising teaching quality or engagement.

These programmes continue to offer rigorous accredited theological education through our partnership with Durham University as part of the Common Awards scheme.

Currently we are undertaking a thorough review of our core undergraduate training for 2027 entry - ensuring it continues to serve both residential and non-residential students well and better supporting the leader-in-training model.

New Programmes for a Changing Church

Foundation Award

The Foundation Award provides an accessible entry point into theological education. With lower entry requirements and flexible online delivery, it creates opportunities for students across the UK and internationally to begin studying theology within a supportive learning community.

MA in Contemporary Christian Leadership

This MA has been designed to help leaders develop sustainable habits of heart, mind, and ministry for long-term service in this increasingly complex landscape. Combining theological reflection with practical leadership formation, the programme seeks to help leaders learn how to do Jesus' work in Jesus' way.

Designed for those serving in churches, ministries, and parachurch organisations in the UK and internationally, the programme uses flexible part-time study and intensive teaching weeks to support those already in leadership roles.

> "Over the last few years we've all seen examples of leadership that have caused real harm. Being quite early on in my career...I really wanted to lay good foundations. Doing this study has helped me form habits of leadership shaped by grace and the gospel, rather than just drifting into patterns set by the culture around me."
>
> **Emma Penwright**
> Current MA in Contemporary Christian Leadership student

Serving the Church Beyond Formal Training

Oak Hill also continues to expand short-course and non-formal learning opportunities, making specialist teaching available to a wider range of church leaders and Christians.

In the last two years alone, more than 230 people have taken part in courses through these flexible learning pathways.

Prioritising the Depth That Forms Faithful Leaders

As theological education changes, Oak Hill remains deeply committed to the kind of formation that prepares people for a lifetime of faithful ministry.

We are seeking to widen access and increase flexibility, but we do not believe depth can simply be replaced by convenience.

Rigorous Theological Formation

Oak Hill undergraduate students currently receive more live teaching contact than any comparable conservative evangelical institution in the UK, with more than 600 hours of live teaching across the core programme.

Students engage deeply with biblical studies, theology, church history, and practical ministry, learning not only to communicate Scripture faithfully, but to think carefully and biblically for the long term. A continued commitment to the biblical languages also remains a distinctive part of Oak Hill's training.

This depth also depends upon specialist faculty. Local church-based training pathways can be enormously valuable, but theological colleges are able to provide sustained access to expertise across a wide range of disciplines.

"If the Lord gives us 20 or 30 years of ministry ahead, then taking three years now to be trained well — with others, and as a family — is completely worth it."

Tim and Rosie Bridges
Curate, St Michael's Fulwell and former student









"What I valued most wasn't just the depth of theological training—though that was significant—but the experience of learning in community. You sharpen one another, challenge one another, and grow together. There's a real blessing in being face-to-face not only with lecturers, but with fellow students, wrestling with Scripture, theology, and ministry together as you prepare for what lies ahead."

Martin Salter
Lead Pastor at Grace Community Church, Bedford and former student









Learning in Person and in Community

Even as online learning expands, we remain convinced that theological education is deeply relational.

For this reason, we continue to prioritise synchronous teaching, whether students are learning in person or online. Rather than relying primarily on pre-recorded content, students participate live: asking questions, engaging discussions, and learning together in real time.

Students are shaped not only through lectures, but through conversations after class, shared meals, prayer together, spontaneous discussions, and ongoing relationships with faculty and fellow students.

This commitment is supported by significant investment in teaching technology and by a strong student-to-faculty ratio of 1:7, with 10 full-time faculty members, 2 part-time faculty, and a wider network of associate teachers involved in teaching and mentoring students.





The Continuing Value of Residential Formation

Alongside growing flexible and non-residential pathways, we continue to believe residential theological training offers unique opportunities for formation.

Whilst not an option for some, many students still choose to relocate and study full-time within the Oak Hill community while remaining actively rooted in local churches and ministry placements.

Living, learning and praying together creates space for friendships, spiritual growth, resilience, and habits of ministry that often last for decades. Students share meals, conversations, prayer, study, and everyday life alongside peers, families, and faculty.

In a fast-moving culture, residential training provides something increasingly rare: time intentionally set aside to prepare for long-term service of Christ and his church.

Our Strategic Plan

Strategic Priorities

We are currently near the end of the second year of our four year strategic plan.

Strategic Priority 1

Broadening the reach (socially, ethnically, theologically) whilst retaining the core (theologically, residentially).

Strategic Priority 2

Pioneer rich community in varied-modes of learning so we are a place where people love to learn alongside each other and become more Christlike as they do.

Strategic Priority 3

An optimised, efficient, motivated high-performing infrastructure (people, place and technology) serving students with excellence and sustainability.





Current progress

We are encouraged that since establishing our Vision for Growth in late 2024, we have seen growth and progress in a number of areas. Our core programmes in Theology, Ministry and Mission continue to be our focus. Predicted entry onto those programmes is returning towards 2020 levels showing growth is not coming purely from diversification of offering.

As indicated below, in the first two years of the plan, the total student body has grown by 77% and the Full Time Equivalent (reflects the actual amount of teaching and support being delivered across students) has grown by 31%.

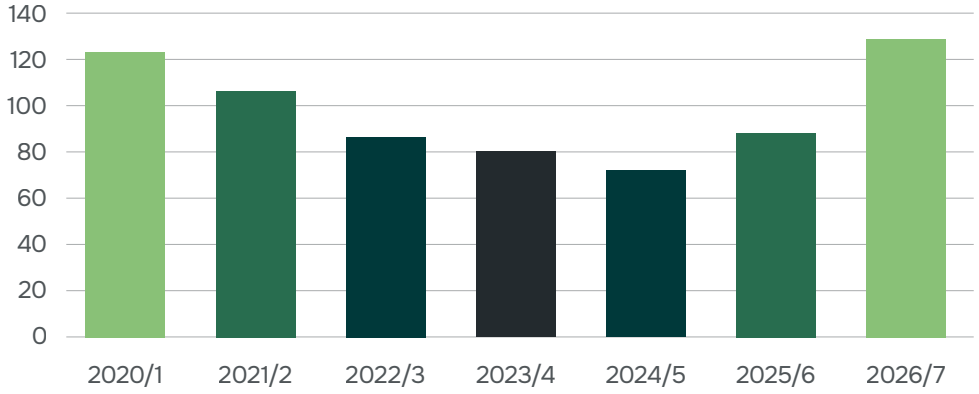
Amongst the marketplace changes, residential training has also continued to be prioritised by many with nearly 50 students each year choosing to study in that form.

	2024-5	2025-6	2026-7*
Total Programme Students	72	88	128
Full-Time Equivalent	62.5	61.8	82.3
Total Residential Students	46	45	47

* Expected entry

Our hope is that by September 2026 our total programme student numbers will be back to where they were in September 2019 and only 20 students off Oak Hill's peak in 2009.

Total student body



Investing in the vision





As a college, we remain committed to our founder's vision of making theological training as accessible and affordable as possible. Financial pressures remain one of the greatest barriers facing those exploring ministry training today.

We believe the church should not have to choose between accessibility and depth. Our aim is to provide rigorous theological formation, rich community, and expert teaching while working hard to ensure that financial circumstances do not prevent gifted men and women from preparing for a lifetime of faithful ministry.

Bursaries

Bursaries are one of the main ways we support students, supplementing the generosity of churches, individuals, and charitable trusts. For many, particularly those studying full-time or supporting families, the cost of training can be significant. Through fee assistance and other forms of financial support, bursaries help ensure that those called to serve Christ and his church are able to access theological education regardless of their circumstances.

We would like to be able to increase bursaries up to £250k a year going forward.





Sustaining a Learning Community

Providing theological education with both depth and flexibility requires ongoing investment. From teaching technology that enables live participation from across the UK and internationally, to residential accommodation, library resources, and teaching spaces, these investments help create a learning environment where students can flourish academically, spiritually, and personally.

Oak Hill has always depended on the generosity of churches, trusts, alumni, and friends who share our conviction that the future health of the church depends on the faithful formation of its leaders. As we look ahead, we are grateful for all who pray for, encourage, and support the college, helping ensure that theological education remains both accessible and deeply formative for future generations.

Every year we need to raise one-quarter of the operating budget to cover the running of the college (£800k).

Partnering with Oak Hill

Thank you for sharing in our vision to equip leaders to see the church flourish. Here is how you can partner with Oak Hill today.

1. Pray
Visit **oakhill.ac.uk/newsletter** to join our prayer network and receive monthly updates straight to your inbox.

2. Advocate
Help us find the next generation of leaders. If you can connect us with potential students or church networks, please contact Jonny Reid, Director of Engagement, on **jonnyr@oakhill.ac.uk**.

3. Partner with us financially
To invest in the future of gospel ministry through Oak Hill, please email Helen Archer-Smith, Director of Operations and Finance, on **helena-s@oakhill.ac.uk**

oakhill.ac.uk

For further information about partnering with Oak Hill, please contact Jonny Reid, Director of Engagement - **jonnyr@oakhill.ac.uk**

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