# **Learning about The United Church of Canada Theological Schools**

## Vancouver School of Theology

### Recruiter or Admissions contact person

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### Open houses or events people can attend in coming year

VST’s doors are usually open to visitors any time. The school offers various public lectures and events throughout the year like the G. Peter Kaye lecture series, Somerville Workshop, the Chancellor’s Dinner, Church Revitalization Day, free public lectures during Summer School, and open houses for inquirers.

If the province’s trajectory towards in person study and activity continues then VST will be able to offer Open Houses and the annual Explorer’s Weekend in person. However, one of the lingering effects of Covid is the new hybrid world, so VST will likely have a virtual and live fall open house and a live Explorer’s weekend in February with parts of it as a virtual component.

If you want a small step into VST information, keep a look out for VST Sunday in January. One Sunday in January each year churches across the country and into the United States share information and testimony about VST.

### How does the coming school year look different from usual? (online learning? smaller class sizes? etc.)

VST has been using the Zoom platform for distance students in class for about five years now. Transitioning to Zoom for all students during the pandemic has been seamless. Moving forward as in person classes are reintroduced the school will keep growing in its hybrid capabilities, offering as many learning opportunities as possible for students.

### What programs do you offer?

On its own VST offers a series of graduate degrees, diplomas, and continuing education certificates. In conjunction with other institutions VST also offers a research PhD and a BA.

VST master’s degrees:

* Master of Divinity (MDiv)
* MDiv Honours
* MDiv by Extension (Indigenous Studies Program)
* MDiv with students at Huron College
* MDiv with students at Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre
* Master of Arts in Theological Studies (MATS)
* Master of Arts in Indigenous and Inter-Religious Studies (MAIIS)
* Master of Arts in Public and Pastoral Leadership (MAPPL)
* MAPPL with a specialization in Spiritual Care

VST advanced master’s degrees and diploma:

* Master of Theology (ThM)
* ThM with a specialization in Indigenous and Inter-Religious Studies
* Graduate Diploma in Theological Studies

VST master’s diplomas:

* Diploma in Theological Studies
* Through VST and through Indigenous Studies Program (ISP)
* Diploma in Denominational Studies
* Diploma in Indigenous and Inter-Religious Studies
* **NEW:** Diploma in Anglican Diaconal Studies (<https://vst.edu/programs/dads/>)

Find out more about our [graduate programs.](https://vst.edu/programs/)

VST partnered with Durham University in England to offer a [joint research PhD program](https://vst.edu/programs/phd/), currently available to Canadian citizens and landed immigrants.

VST partnered with St. Mark’s College to offer a [VST Track BA in Theology and Culture](https://vst.edu/programs/ba/). This is an exciting initiative in which a student can begin their undergraduate study at St. Mark’s and in their final two years take all the first-year foundational VST master’s courses. Upon successful admission to VST for a master’s degree, the student will have already completed their first year before beginning the program!

There are also continuing education opportunities at VST.

VST certificates:

* Certificate in Theological Studies
* Certificate Indigenous Studies Program
* **NEW**: [Certificate in Children, Youth and Family Ministries](https://vst.edu/programs/ccyfm/)

### Can people study by distance?

Of course! Students who cannot come to Vancouver full time can study from wherever they are.

Students can take courses synchronistically (live) and asynchronistically (watch a recording of the class within the week). Synchronous students’ faces appear on a screen in the classroom – everyone in class can see and hear each other. It’s easy to interrupt, ask questions, and be in group discussions.

Because VST is accredited through the Association of Theological Schools, 25‒30 percent of various degrees must be accomplished in person. VST has created a schedule of three annual onsite visits that ensure the in-person requirement is met and community among both distance and local students is nurtured.

Distance students coming to campus for an intensive course can apply to the short-term housing fund and receive up to 50 percent off their housing costs during their stay.

VST has four programs that can be completed 100% by distance: Master of Theology (ThM), Master of Arts in Theological Studies (MATS), Diploma in Theological Studies (DTS), Certificate in Theological Studies (CTS).

### What financial support does your school offer students?

VST continues to be blessed with generous donors who want to contribute to a student’s ability to study. VST has five entrance scholarships for which people can apply, and one final-year scholarship that VST administers. As well, there are many external funding opportunities listed on the VST website. The Lai Huang Bursary is available to full time ministry-track students who come from and/or will minister in predominantly Muslim countries and who will further positive Christian-Muslim relationships. And, VST has a very healthy bursary program―students can receive up to 50 per cent off their tuition based on financial need (this number was raised to 70% during the pandemic).

### Can people take Centre for Christian Studies or Designated Lay Ministry externals with you?

Yes, CCS and DLM externals can be completed through VST.

Whether a student has an undergraduate degree or not, they are eligible to take their external courses through VST. They would take the courses as unclassified students. Then they would send the registrar a letter from the school stating they are a current student in good standing.

NB: Students with an undergraduate degree may want to consider turning their external courses into a [VST Diploma in Theological Studies](https://vst.edu/programs/dts/). For example, the eight CCS externals would satisfy the requirements for a diploma—the extra step would be submitting an application to VST for the diploma program.

### What is your approach to equipping people preparing for ministry leadership?

VST is called to form and educate thoughtful, engaged, and generous Christian leaders.

To do this work the school makes available a number of resources and opportunities for learning. Ministry students have access to their Director of Denominational Formation, who journeys with them through the church and academic requirements of their degree. As well, faculty are ever present to students for questions, conversation, and further study.

With the blessing of an Inter-Religious program and Indigenous Studies program, students learn how to go deep in their understanding of their own faith tradition and wide in their understanding of other faith traditions.

The school’s week is centred around community worship in which all members of the school’s community contribute to leadership and learn from each other’s traditions. The VSTSA (student association) creates opportunities throughout the year for community building and formation, and members of the association sit on all the school’s committees.

### Do you have an affiliation with an undergraduate school?

YES. VST has partnered with St. Mark’s College on the University of British Columbia campus. Discerners can apply to the [St. Mark’s VST Track—BA in Theology and Culture](http://stmarkscollege.ca/channels/undergraduate-programs/vst-track-ba/), and in their last two years of undergraduate study students may take all the VST first-year master’s foundational courses through VST. So, by the time students graduate they will have decreased their total study time by one whole year.

### What makes your school unique?

All of today’s theological schools must adopt innovative approaches to education. Many schools are partnering with other institutions to offer fast-track undergraduate degrees, joint PhD programs, part-time study, and distance education. VST offers all of these.

VST has also managed to provide an ecumenical classroom experience while staying true to its Christian roots. Most students come from Christian traditions from around the world, but because of the Inter-Religious program and the school’s almost 40-year relationship with Indigenous communities through the Indigenous Studies program, the student body is made up of strong and faithful voices from a variety of faith traditions.

A very exciting trend happening at VST right now is the increase in enrolment. Over the last three years VST has seen a steady increase in new student enrolment; this year was the highest enrolment of the school’s history.

### Anything else people should know?

If you want to experience VST, VST wants to [welcome you](https://vst.edu/about/welcome/). If there are barriers to your learning—financial, educational, geographic—talk to Richard Topping, VST’s principal. He would welcome the conversation. If God is calling you to a theological education, then VST will do its part to help make that happen.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact:

Rev. Dr. Richard Topping, Principal
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*or*

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