

MATS THESIS GUIDELINES

MATS THESIS OPTION: A MATS student may petition to the Research Studies Committee to be allowed to complete her/his course of study by researching and writing a thesis. The thesis would be an advisable path for those, for example, who will be applying for further academic study at other universities. If the thesis option is chosen and approved by the Research Studies Committee, the thesis counts as an additional 6 credit hours within the concentration.

Writing a MATS thesis: A MATS student may petition to the Research Studies Committee to be allowed to complete her/his course of study by researching and writing a thesis. The thesis would be an advisable path for those who will be applying for further academic study at other universities. An initial petition shall be presented to the Research Studies Committee after the completion of no less than 18 credit hours of study and no more than 24 credit hours of study.

This petition should include:

- a rationale of no more than 500 words as to why this route of program completion should be granted.
- the proposed thesis topic (no more than 750 words).
- the student's academic record to date. The student is responsible for acquiring a copy of her/his academic record from the registrar's office and including this with the petition; this should include narrative evaluations from the student's file.
- A note from a proposed faculty thesis advisor indicating her/his willingness and availability to undertake the supervision of the thesis student.

The Committee will act both on the letter of petition and, if appropriate, on the appointment of a thesis advisor. When the petition for the writing of a thesis has been granted, the thesis adds 6 elective hours of study in the student's area of concentration. The Committee will relay its approval of the thesis option in writing both to the student and to the registrar, thereby alerting the registrar that the student may now enroll in thesis preparation units. The student will then complete a thesis agreement form to be submitted to the Registrar.

MATS Thesis Description: The thesis itself is an extended essay, a critically reasoned, academic engagement, setting forth a proposition—sometimes called “the problem” or “the argument” or “the thesis statement.” The substance of the thesis project 1) situates the scholarly proposition within a particular field and within a selected method of study; 2) gathers primary and secondary literature and data relevant to the argument, and 3) poses a conclusion. A MATS thesis is expected to be approximately 18,750-22,500 words in length (exclusive of footnotes and bibliography).

MATS Thesis Competencies: A MATS thesis will show an engagement with a theological issue and theological resources at a level commensurate with a first degree in theological studies:

- 1) *The thesis will clearly identify and articulate a theological problem;*
- 2) *The thesis will identify and summarize a range of primary and secondary sources, bearing on that problem;*
- 3) *The thesis will identify and articulate a method appropriate to framing the theological problem;*
- 4) *The thesis will, employing that method, provide a critical assessment of the sources reviewed;*
- 5) *The thesis will formulate a preliminary response to the problem based on the sources reviewed.*

Content and Development of the Thesis Proposal: The student will work with the thesis advisor appointed by the Research Studies Committee to bring forth a thesis proposal. A thesis proposal is itself an academic document, and shall be, apart from the working bibliography, 2500 to 3000 words in length.

The thesis proposal will use the outline of the competencies above to structure the proposal itself, identifying and describing:

- 1) a theological problem, culminating in a thesis statement which may be framed as a statement or question and must state in succinct form the hypothesis or argument the thesis will support;*
- 2) the primary and secondary sources relevant to the thesis argument, fitting the thesis thereby into a critical review of scholarship in the relevant field;*
- 3) a method appropriate to the theological problem;*
- 4) a procedure or outline of the thesis, setting out in brief form how the argument of the thesis will develop chapter by chapter, including proposed outcomes or conclusions. An outline of chapters may conclude this section.*
- 5) A calendar of proposed chapter submissions and editorial revisions, which should be carefully reviewed by the faculty thesis advisor so as to coordinate with his/her workload, shall accompany the thesis proposal.*

The thesis proposal must be submitted by the end of the 10th week of the term prior to the term in which the student expects to complete the thesis—the date to be specified by the registrar in the school calendar. Research Studies Committee vets the thesis proposal and, if approved, appoints the second reader.

Thesis Evaluation: The thesis in its entirety must be submitted no later than the Friday of the 10th week of the semester in which the student intends to graduate—the date to be set by the Registrar and listed on the annual school calendar. At that point, the student submits four copies of the thesis. The examiners will consult and jointly confer one of the following evaluations on the thesis: Approved, Approved with Corrections, Not Approved. The faculty thesis advisor will ensure that comments for any required corrections are communicated to the student clearly in writing.

In the case of an evaluation of Approved with Corrections, the student will work with the Faculty Advisor to make necessary corrections. When this has been done, normally no later than the last day to submit work in the semester the student expects to graduate, the faculty advisor will communicate to the Research Studies Coordinator that the thesis has been completed and will submit the grade and a narrative evaluation to the Registrar.

In the case of a Not Approved, the student will have one opportunity, working with the faculty advisor, to re-write the thesis. The student will need to register and pay the maintenance fee for another semester in order to finish the thesis. The re-written thesis will be re-submitted for examination by both the faculty advisor and second reader.

The style for a thesis is defined by the field of study, and the student should work with the Library Director as soon as possible to make sure that they are using the correct style manual. Once the thesis has been evaluated and approved by the advisor and second reader, the student will meet with the Library Director for approval of formatting and citations. When the Library Director is satisfied with the document, the student will submit three hard copies of the thesis for library binding.