

ThM THESIS AND PROJECT GUIDELINES

ThM Thesis Description: If the thesis option for the ThM program is chosen by the student, this requires that the student successfully complete a thesis demonstrating scholarly competence, including the formulation of a research topic or question relevant to the field of study, critical understanding of primary and secondary sources in the field, demonstration of appropriate research methods, and the ability to make a sustained and critical scholarly contribution to the field. The ThM thesis should be 22,500 – 30,000 words. The ThM project option will likewise show scholarly competence in a more delimited area of study in a paper of 11250 – 12500 words. If the project includes alternate media (performance, video, etc) the paper will be 7500 – 8750 words. The student must make a satisfactory oral defense of the thesis/project before a committee of examiners appointed by the Research Studies Committee.

Thesis Competencies: The ThM thesis will show an engagement with a theological issue and theological resources commensurate with a second degree in theological studies.

- Identify and articulate a theological problem
- Identify and read primary sources relevant to the problem in the original language where applicable
- Place the theological problem within the context of relevant secondary literature, fitting the problem into a critical review of scholarship in the relevant field
- Identify and demonstrate competency in applying a method appropriate to the theological problem
- Formulate a cogent and sustained argument in response to the problem in light of the critical review of the literature

Project Competencies: The ThM project will demonstrate similar competencies and use a qualitative research based, media based, or other project as the core of the work. The accompanying paper will address the competencies articulated above in setting the project into the field of research and a theological problem.

Content and Development of the Thesis/Project Proposal: In the semester before the ThM thesis or the ThM project is to be undertaken, the student shall work with the Research Studies Coordinator and appropriate Faculty member(s) to select a Faculty Advisor for the thesis or project, who shall be appointed by the Research Studies Committee. In specific cases where other expertise is needed at the proposal stage, a Second Advisor may be appointed by the Research Studies Committee.

The ThM thesis reading course [first of two course thesis], or the ThM project course, must be authorized by the Research Studies Coordinator and the appointed Faculty Thesis/Project Advisor no later than the registration deadline of the term in which the thesis/project is undertaken. A Thesis Agreement Form should be submitted to the Registrar, signed by the Research Studies Coordinator and the appointed Faculty Thesis/Project Advisor. The student is advised to work with the Director of the Library in the preparation of the thesis/project proposal for help in locating relevant research and in formatting the proposal.

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

- a theological problem, and articulating 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
- the primary sources relevant to the problem
- the context of relevant secondary literature, fitting the problem into a critical review of scholarship in the relevant field
- a method appropriate to the theological problem
- a procedure or outline of the thesis setting out in brief form how the argument of the thesis will develop chapter by chapter. An outline of chapters can conclude this section
- Formulate a cogent and sustained argument in response to the problem in light of the critical review of the literature
- The length of the thesis proposal will vary according to the practices of the field of study; a general guideline is 3000 to 4200 words/10-14 pages, exclusive of bibliography.

The style for a ThM thesis/project is defined by the field of study, and the student should work with the Library Director to make sure that they are using the correct style manual.

When the Faculty Advisor and the student judge that the proposal is ready for evaluation, the Faculty Advisor will communicate in writing (email) to the Research Studies Coordinator that the thesis/project proposal is ready for evaluation and the student will submit the proposal to the Research Studies Coordinator. The Research Studies Committee will evaluate all ThM thesis and project proposals. If a proposal is not approved in its first submission, a student will be given evaluative comments and may re-submit their proposal a second time for approval.

The proposal must be submitted for approval by the Research Studies Committee no later than the end of the term prior to the term in which the student expects to finish the thesis/project; this date to be set by the Registrar.

At the time when the thesis/project is deemed ready by the student and the Faculty Advisor, and in no case later than the stated thesis submission date in the semester in which the thesis or project is to be completed, the Faculty Advisor will communicate in writing (email) to the Research Studies Coordinator that the thesis/project is ready for examination. The student will submit four hard copies of the thesis or the project to the Research Studies Coordinator. ***[Email submissions of theses/projects are not normally allowed.]*** At the time that the thesis is submitted, an abstract of 300 words in must also be sent to the Research Studies Coordinator in electronic form.

In order to give the Research Studies Committee sufficient time to locate second reader for a ThM thesis or project, the Faculty Advisor shall notify the Research Studies Coordinator in writing (email) by the Monday after Reading Week that the thesis/project will in his or her estimation be ready for examination by the due date ***[as specified in the "Major Paper and Thesis Due Date Chart"]***.

Second Reader for a ThM thesis: The examination of a ThM thesis requires a panel of two examiners, one of whom may be a person who is not a faculty member of the School. The second examiner is appointed at the point where the thesis is ready for examination. The second reader normally does not participate in the actual direction of the thesis/project and is expected only to read the completed thesis and participate in the oral examination of the thesis. If a Second Advisor has been appointed for the preparation of the proposal and thesis/project, the Second Advisor may be appointed as the Second Reader.

Second Reader for a ThM project: The examination of a ThM project requires a panel of two examiners, one of whom may be a person who is not a faculty member of the School. The second examiner is appointed at the point where the project is ready for examination. The second reader normally does not participate in the actual direction of the project and is expected only to read the completed project and participate in the oral examination of the project. If a Second Advisor has been appointed for the preparation of the proposal and thesis/project, the Second Advisor may be appointed as the Second Reader.

The Research Studies Coordinator will set a time for the examination acceptable to all concerned and at least one week before the date for graduating students to submit work. At the thesis or project examination, the Research Studies Coordinator [or his/her appointee] will be chair of the proceedings. The decision of the two examiners must be unanimous.

The examination normally will take 1 - 2 hours. It will begin with the student making a brief presentation of their work, and then the examiners will proceed to ask questions that require the student to explain and defend their thesis or project. In the case in which a performance is part of a project, a recording of sufficient quality to permit examination must be submitted at or immediately after the examination. The technical arrangements for the video recording shall be accomplished by the student.

At the end of the examination, the examiners will confer one of the following evaluations for the thesis/project on the basis of the oral examination: Approved, Approved with Minor Corrections, Approved with Major Corrections, Not Approved. The Chair of the Examining Committee and the Faculty Advisor will ensure that comments for any required corrections are communicated to the student clearly in writing.

The Director of the Library will also examine the thesis/project for approval of formatting and citations.

In the case of an evaluation of Approved or Approved with Minor Corrections, the student will work with the Faculty Advisor to make any corrections needed. When this has been done, normally no later than the last day to submit work in the semester the student expects to graduate, the student will submit the corrected thesis/project to the Director of the Library and the Faculty Advisor, who will communicate to the Research Studies Coordinator that the thesis/project has been completed and will submit the grade and a narrative evaluation to the Registrar.

In the case of an evaluation of Approved with Major Corrections, the examining Committee will specify who must approve the corrections—the Faculty Advisor, or the whole Examining Committee. If the student is completing the thesis at the end of their program, they must submit the corrected thesis by the stated date for graduating students to submit work. The student may need to register and pay for another semester of registration in order to finish the thesis/project. When the Faculty Advisor or Examining Committee has approved the thesis, the student will submit the corrected thesis/project to the Director of the Library and the Faculty Advisor, who will communicate to the Research Studies Coordinator that the thesis/project has been completed and will submit the grade and a narrative evaluation to the Registrar.

In the case of an evaluation of Not Approved, the student will work with the Faculty Advisor to re-write the thesis. The student will need to register and pay for another semester of registration in order to finish the thesis/project. The re-written thesis/project will be re-submitted for examination under the above guidelines, normally before the same examination committee when possible.

Three clear copies of the final approved version thesis/project must be submitted to the Librarian before the degree is conferred. An abstract of 300 words must accompany each copy.