



# Th.M. Thesis Defense Guidelines

The ThM Thesis defense should take place after the thesis has been submitted (Monday of student's final reading week) and before the end of final exam week for the semester in question. If the student is graduating in the summer, the thesis defense should take place prior to August 10<sup>th</sup>. It will typically last about one hour. Those present should include the ThM student, the thesis supervisor, and the second reader. Individuals may participate remotely using Skype or conference calling if needed. The defense may take place on campus or, if agreeable to the student and faculty, may take place at a coffee shop or similar near campus. Students may invite others to attend the defense if desired. To avoid scheduling difficulties, setting a defense date with the advisor and reader as soon as possible prior to the submission of the thesis is recommended.

Prior to the defense, the supervisor and second reader should provide students with written feedback on the thesis.

During the defense, students have an opportunity to respond to written feedback they have received regarding the thesis. Faculty may pose further critical questions regarding the thesis. In addition, faculty and students should discuss the implications of the thesis for the wider field of study and for the student's vocation. For example, if a student plans to pursue doctoral work, what are further, related questions the students might explore? How might they build on this research in their doctoral program? If a student is entering or returning to the practice of ministry, how will the work they have done in their thesis shape that ministry? How might they translate this research for a lay audience? What questions remain to be answered/addressed? The tone of the defense should be constructive and not harrowing.

Finally, the defense is an occasion to acknowledge the student's accomplishment. For many ThM students, the thesis is the most significant piece of research they have completed to date. The defense allows an opportunity to celebrate student achievement.

Once the student has defended the thesis, the thesis supervisor should submit by email a one paragraph narrative summary of the defense to the student and the Office of Academic Programs ([academics@div.duke.edu](mailto:academics@div.duke.edu)). This summary will be included in the student's portfolio.