



M.T.S. Thesis Guidelines

The Nature of the Project

The goal of the M.T.S. thesis is to provide students with an opportunity to conclude their course of study by synthesizing and focusing their intellectual interest under the discipline of a substantial written paper. This thesis may build upon and elaborate work done in a previous paper in the program or may probe in the direction of future academic study (e.g., a possible dissertation topic). The thesis can therefore: 1) focus on a specific text, figure, or question within a field; 2) integrate two or more disciplines with respect to a particular topic; or 3) apply a certain theoretical perspective to an issue or problem in the church or society.

The thesis should be well researched, clearly written, and represent a significant act of intellectual engagement. **It would normally be at least 7,500 words (30 pages), although some projects will necessitate greater length.** Artistic projects may be proposed in place of a traditional research paper. However, an artistic project must still include a written description of the theoretical basis for the creative work the student does in another medium. **This written description will normally take the same form as the traditional M.T.S. thesis and be at least 5,000 words (20 pages) in length.**

The Divinity School library does not retain copies of the M.T.S. thesis.

Procedures for Writing the Final Thesis

The M.T.S. final thesis may be written within the context of a course in which the student is currently enrolled, or as part of a directed study, or as an additional paper outside of current coursework. Normally, the thesis is written in the student's final semester of enrollment. If the thesis is written within the context of a course, it can also satisfy a regular paper requirement within that course. However, the course instructor will normally expect the thesis to exceed the requirements for the course paper, both in terms of its quality of engagement and its length. If the course does not otherwise require a paper, then the thesis will simply be done in addition to the existing course requirements. All other requirements for the course must still be met.

Students must secure written permission from a faculty member to serve as an advisor for the final thesis. Students also may seek out a second reader, though they are not required to do so. Students must submit to the Office of Academic Formation and Programs (108 Gray) a one-page thesis proposal (a form is available on the Divinity website) that includes the thesis title and a brief description of the topic. This proposal must be submitted no later than October 15 (for a thesis to be completed in the fall) or February 15 (for a thesis to be completed in the spring) and must be signed by the thesis advisor, the second reader (if there is one), and the M.T.S. director.



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It is expected that the student will work closely with the faculty thesis advisor in order to shape the thesis' precise topic, coordinate the necessary research, and reach agreement about the thesis' exact length, format, and style (e.g., Turabian, Chicago, Society of Biblical Literature, etc.).

The thesis does not receive a letter grade unless it is written as part of a course or a directed study. In these contexts, the responsibility for determining a letter grade lies solely with the instructor of the course or directed study, and the grade does not, on its own, signal approval of the thesis as a paper.

Submitting a Final Draft of the Thesis

A final draft of the thesis will be due to the thesis advisor no later than noon on the first day of the final reading week in the semester which the student will graduate. The thesis should be accompanied by a cover page that includes space for the signatures of the thesis advisor, any second reader, and the M.T.S. director. **Students should submit the thesis by emailing the final version to the thesis advisor and copying the M.T.S. director and the Director of Academic Formation and Programs.** A thesis advisor may request that the student also submit a hard copy of the thesis.

After receiving the thesis, the faculty advisor and any second reader should communicate approval or rejection of the thesis to the M.T.S. director, who will then communicate the results to the Office of Academic Formation and Programs. It is also acceptable for the thesis advisor to notify the Office of Academic Formation and Programs directly of approval or rejection of the thesis, who will then verify approval or rejection with the M.T.S. director. If the thesis is approved, the M.T.S. director will submit a copy of the signed cover page to the Office of Academic Formation and Programs. Except in those cases where the M.T.S. director is also a reader, the M.T.S. director's signature does not indicate an evaluative judgment but serves only an administrative function that aids in tracking the completion of the final thesis.

The faculty thesis advisor is responsible for providing a written evaluation of the thesis to the student. Especially in light of the fact that many M.T.S. students hope to pursue further academic work, thesis advisors are encouraged to supply ample comments when they review a thesis. Second readers (if applicable) should also seek to provide student paper writers with analytical comments on their work. Copies of these written evaluations should be given to the Office of Academic Formation and Programs for inclusion in students' academic records.