# M.T.S. Thesis Guidelines

## Timeline for M.T.S. Thesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Deadline if Spring Graduate</th>
<th>Deadline if Summer Graduate</th>
<th>Deadline if Fall Graduate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Find your advisor (Recommended)</td>
<td>November 1</td>
<td>February 1</td>
<td>July 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration of directed study (this is optional)</td>
<td>Spring registration in the Fall preceding graduation</td>
<td>Summer registration in the Spring preceding graduation</td>
<td>Fall registration in the Spring preceding graduation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Completed Thesis Proposal (via Thesis Proposal Form); requires secured supervisor and reader</td>
<td>February 15</td>
<td>May 15</td>
<td>October 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full draft due to advisor for review (recommended)</td>
<td>No later than 2 weeks prior to the first day of Reading Week</td>
<td>No later than four weeks before the end of finals</td>
<td>No later than 2 weeks prior to the first day of Reading Week</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final thesis due to reader and MTS director for signatures (includes cover page – use cover page template)</td>
<td>No later than Noon on the first day of Reading Week</td>
<td>No later than two weeks before the end of finals</td>
<td>No later than Noon on the first day of Reading Week</td>
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</table>

Students should submit the thesis by emailing the final version to the thesis supervisor and second reader and copying the M.T.S. director and academics@div.duke.edu

Signed cover sheets to 108 Gray (student responsibility)/Notification of approval by advisor (cc MTS Director) to Office of Academic Programs (one paragraph narrative summary) (No exceptions given past this date that keep the student a graduate of that term)

Advisor feedback to student

All materials due to 108 Gray, Office of Academic Programs, can be dropped off or emailed to academics@div.duke.edu.

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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

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.

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 submit to the Office of Academic Programs 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. Deadlines above.

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.).

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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 by the deadlines above with the cover page (use template on Forms and Paradigms website). Students should submit the thesis by emailing the final version to the thesis advisor and copying the M.T.S. director and the Office 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 Programs. It is also acceptable for the thesis advisor to notify the Office of Academic 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 student will submit a signed copy of the cover page to the Office of Academic Formation and Programs.

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 Programs for inclusion in students’ academic records.

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