



**St. Augustine's Seminary of Toronto  
Institute of Theology  
Master of Theological Studies [MTS] Degree Program**

**THESIS AND SUMMATIVE PROJECT GUIDELINES  
PUBLISHED MAY 19, 2015, REVISED AUGUST 2021  
EFFECTIVE FOR STUDENTS ENTERING THE MTS DEGREE PROGRAM  
SEPTEMBER 2012 AND FOLLOWING**

The final requirement for the St. Augustine's Seminary Institute of Theology Master of Theological Studies degree program [MTS] is a thesis or summative project worth two credits and one credit respectively. The following options are available. Each is summarized here, then described in greater detail.

- a) Thesis Option is worth two credits. An **A-** average in previous course work is required in order to write a thesis. The thesis and thesis supervisor must be chosen in consultation with the Director of the Institute of Theology; and one additional course must be taken in the same area as the Thesis. The Director of the Institute of Theology and Thesis Supervisor will decide on the second reader for the Thesis.
- b) Summative Project [SP] is worth one credit. The summative project and faculty supervisor must be chosen in consultation with the Director of the Institute of Theology and two additional courses must be taken in the same area as the Summative Project; a second reader is not required for the summative project. The two options are:
  - i. A survey of literature
  - ii. An extended research paper.

General principles

1. There is some advantage to deciding the topic earlier in the program, because then you can choose elective courses which will help prepare you for the thesis or summative project. In the case of the MTS thesis option, this is particularly important, especially if you are thinking of it as preparation for a doctoral program.
2. It is recommended that at the end of the first year of study [after 10 core courses] at the latest and in consultation with the Director of the Institute of Theology, you should decide which option you wish to pursue, a topic and a suitable thesis/faculty supervisor.
3. Guidelines about your thesis/faculty advisor:
  - a) In most cases the thesis/faculty supervisor will be a member of the St. Augustine's faculty.
  - b) If there are weighty reasons for asking a person outside St. Augustine's or TST to serve as the thesis/faculty supervisor, permission of Academic Dean must be obtained.
  - c) The student is entirely responsible for the paper, and the role of the thesis/faculty supervisor is to offer guidance and comment. However, it is unwise for the student to embark in a direction against the advice of the thesis/faculty supervisor.
  - d) Should you, in the course of research, think it advisable to change your topic or direction, you should first consult with your thesis/faculty supervisor.

- e) If either of you feels the need to change thesis/faculty supervisor during the course of the thesis or summative project, this should be discussed with the Director of the Institute of Theology.
4. With the guidance of your thesis/faculty supervisor, you will fill out a “Basic Degree Summative Project/Thesis Registration” form, available from the Registrar’s Office. It will be counter-signed by the thesis/faculty supervisor and the registrar. A TST course designator will be assigned, and the course title will include the phrase “MTS Thesis/Summative Project”.
  5. By the beginning of October, with the guidance of your thesis/faculty supervisor, you should have prepared a formal written proposal for the Thesis/Summative Project, including a statement of the topic, a thesis statement (if appropriate), an outline, and a bibliography. In the case of the Thesis, this proposal should be five pages long; in the case of other options, it should be two or three pages. (*More specific details about the form of proposal required for each are given below.*)
  6. You should meet with your thesis/faculty supervisor as often as needed. The thesis/faculty supervisor may direct you to specific sources, and make suggestions as to method, content, and style. At the same time, a high degree of independent work is assumed.
  7. For the Summative Projects, the faculty supervisor is the only reader and examiner; in the case of the Thesis, there are two readers (see details of thesis option below).
  8. The Thesis/Summative Project are to be prepared as per the rules of style in the latest edition of Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students & Researchers*. They must be written in proper English style and must be free of mistakes in grammar, syntax, spelling, and typography. Available in the St. Augustine’s Seminary Library and SAS Website:  
[http://www.staugustines.on.ca/library/academic\\_writing\\_resources](http://www.staugustines.on.ca/library/academic_writing_resources).
  9. It must be typed, double-spaced, in a 12-point font, on 8 ½ by 11-inch white paper. Margins should be 1-inch or a little more per side. It should be left justified. Pages should be numbered. A title page should be supplied.
  10. Normally, the Thesis/SP will be completed during the second semester of the year in which the student hopes to graduate. Deadlines for submission are the final day of exam week in the second semester. Students who anticipate that they will not complete the thesis at the end of the second semester will send a written request to the Academic Dean for an extension, which will not exceed the summer session. A grade of SDF will be given until such time as the final grade is assigned.

**PLEASE NOTE:** If the student plans to graduate in the November Convocation, the work must be completed before August 15th.

## **A. THESIS**

### *Background and purpose*

The M.T.S. thesis should demonstrate appropriate academic skills in the use of primary sources and a sound critical appreciation of the secondary literature on the chosen topic. It should demonstrate familiarity with the significant issues raised by the topic, and the range of possible differences in interpretation in dealing with those issues. It should reflect a capacity for independent judgment, scholarly argument, and good expository writing. It need not make an original contribution to knowledge.

*Please note: Students are required to have an A- average in their course work in order to choose the thesis option.*

The standards for the Master of Theological Studies Thesis are:

#### **1. General Standards:**

- a) The most common error in defining a thesis topic is defining it too broadly. The topic must be specific enough to enable the student to engage in a thorough, systematic and intensive study of the relevant sources, and, in principle, to be able to provide persuasive evidence for every statement that the thesis makes.
- b) The student is responsible for accuracy in typography, spelling, punctuation, word divisions, grammar, and for proper style. If the thesis supervisor judges a thesis to be unsatisfactory in any of these respects, it will be returned to the student for revision, resulting in the postponement of the evaluation of the thesis.

#### **2. Thesis Proposal:**

- a) The thesis proposal is to be prepared in consultation with the thesis supervisor. The thesis proposal should be presented to the Academic Dean for approval no later than the first week of October and the Academic Dean will render a decision no later than the end of October to the thesis supervisor who will inform the student.
- b) A title page including thesis title, student's name, thesis supervisor, date, programme, etc.
- c) The Introduction must provide a description of the research field, including the setting of the thesis, e.g. why the question(s) it addresses is significant, how the question relates to other areas of research, and a detailed account of the background for the specific area of research of this thesis. The Introduction should also include a description of the project as a whole. Most importantly, the Introduction must contain a thesis statement, setting out in the briefest possible form, the exact propositions or hypothesis that the thesis will demonstrate.
- d) The methodology should be set forth including an expression of why the method is important to the particular research field and how it will be used to generate and verify the conclusions in the thesis.
- e) A topical outline and general content by areas or by chapter, with description and relationship of each to the others is necessary to the Thesis Proposal.
- f) A working bibliography must be presented.
- g) Thesis proposals will vary in length but should be between 600 and 1000 words.

### 3. Thesis

- a) The title page should include:
  - i) Title and subtitle of the thesis (upper part);
  - ii) Specification of the degree program
  - iii) Full Legal Name of the student
  - iv) Place and date (bottom)
  - v) Thesis copyright notice
- b) It will normally be fifty to sixty pages in length with an upper limit of seventy-five pages. Please refer to General Principles, §8 and §9 pertaining to formatting details.
- c) The Bibliography must distinguish between works cited and works consulted. The Bibliography should be prepared as per the rules of style in the latest edition of Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students & Researchers*. Available in the St. Augustine's Seminary Library and SAS Website: [http://www.staugustines.on.ca/library/academic\\_writing\\_resources](http://www.staugustines.on.ca/library/academic_writing_resources).
- d) One faculty member, who may be from another college, will supervise the thesis.
- e) The thesis will be based on independent research (not connected to any writing and research done before or during preparation of the thesis) and recorded as such on the Master of Theological Studies transcript.
- f) The thesis will be a Y course worth two credits.
- g) Deadlines for submission and extension information are noted in the General Principles [#10].
- h) Two copies must be presented (one for the thesis supervisor and one for the second reader). The two readers consult with each on the evaluation and agree on a final grade. The final grade is submitted to the Academic Dean, along with evaluative comments (each reader can submit their own evaluative comments; or a single common evaluation can be submitted). When the readers are unable agree on a common grade, the Academic Dean may choose to call a meeting of the readers to arrive at a consensus or may simply choose to record the average of their two grades as the final grade.
- i) Students are required to make the necessary modifications and revisions requested by the thesis supervisor before submitting a bound copy to the Academic Dean.
- j) **Binding Information:** The dimension of the thesis should be 8 ½ x 11. It should have a hard cover in black with gold lettering. St. Augustine's Library uses Wallaceburg Bookbinding (call 1-800-214-2463 to make sure that they accept individual orders) or Commercial Bookbinding can be contacted at 416-291-9300.

## **B. SUMMATIVE PROJECT OPTIONS**

### **1. A SURVEY OF LITERATURE**

#### **Background and purpose**

In a literature survey, the student will choose a specific topic in the area of theological studies and identify, discuss, evaluate, and relate significant books, articles, and other resources. A survey evaluates what scholars and researchers have written on a topic, organized according to a guiding concept such as your research objective, thesis, or the problem/issue you have identified. You may need to include studies contrary to your own perspective. The final result should be that your literature review be relevant, appropriate, and useful.

The Survey of Literature is worth one credit. Unlike the Thesis, the Survey of Literature requires only a faculty supervisor, and no second reader.

#### Specific guidelines

1. The written proposal, to be submitted to the faculty supervisor by the first week in October, should include the following information:
  - a. The topic of the paper, together with its importance and implications. A specific title should be proposed.
  - b. A statement of how the paper is to be organized. This may take the form of an analytical table of contents, with rationale.
  - c. Any necessary or helpful background. In some cases, you may want to offer personal reasons for selecting the proposed topic.
  - d. A bibliography. By the time the proposal is submitted, you should already be aware of some of the major works and authors to be reviewed, but the nature of the Literature Survey is that you will add to the bibliography as you proceed. Your faculty supervisor will be able to make further suggestions.
  - e. The proposal is usually two or three pages in length, plus the first draft of the bibliography.
2. Deadlines for submission and extension information are noted in the General Principles [#10].
3. Your purpose in writing is to demonstrate reading, understanding and a thoughtful evaluation of the resources you are using. Below are some guidelines for composing a survey of literature.

\*\*\*\*[The following draws on a fuller introduction to literature surveys, written by Dr. Tom Power of Wycliffe College.]

#### **I Introduction**

The most important section of the literature survey is the Introduction. It will set the scene for the rest of the project in the compilation of materials. It should be written before choosing literature to include in the survey. Refer back to the Introduction as materials are chosen and write evaluations or annotations. The Introduction is best written after some general reading is done on the topic.

The Introduction should define the topic and should include the following:

- One sentence summarizing the topic
- Statement of how the topic fits into the larger context of the subject area
- Definitions of any terms used
- Statement as to how selective or comprehensive the survey and accompanying bibliography is.

## **II Methods**

In order to write an informed evaluation of literature relevant to the topic, two methodological skills are required:

- a) *Information Literacy*: the ability to locate relevant literature (books, articles, essays, theses, or electronic resources) using efficient information seeking skills.
- b) *Critical Evaluation*: the ability to apply evaluative criteria in order to identify those works which are central to the topic.

## **III Evaluation of Books/Articles/Essays**

As reading is done, it is important to bear in mind questions such as the following:

- Why was the book/article written? What theological tradition is the publisher in? Catholic, liberal, evangelical, reformed, or broad academic?
- Examine the table of contents and/or headings to determine if the book is organized in a logical and understandable manner.
- Date of Publication
- Who is the author? What are the author's sources of information? Perspective? Bias?
- How relevant is this work to the topic?
- For what type of reader is the author writing?

## **IV Writing Annotations**

In the evaluative annotation the source's strengths and weaknesses is given and assessed. This is where the evaluation of the source's usefulness, critically stating its place in the field in relation to the topic is given. Most annotations will combine one or two sentences summarizing or describing content, and one or two sentences providing an evaluation.

Sample annotation on the topic of New Testament theology:

Goppelt, L. *A Theology of the New Testament*. 2 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981, 1982. The first volume includes a great deal of material on the history of and methods of the discipline of biblical theology. Goppelt is especially insightful when he treats salvation history. Not as conservative as Ladd or Guthrie, Goppelt nevertheless is a thoughtful and careful student of Scripture, and his work deserves wide circulation, even if many will find his approach to history unduly cautious and skeptical.

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## V Summation

After completing the steps above, the student should have a sense of the *status quaestionis*, that is, the current state of scholarly enquiry concerning the topic, including areas of general agreement and areas of specific disagreement. The student should indicate how this literature review has contributed to the *status quaestionis*.

- a) The Survey of Literature will normally be thirty to forty pages in length with an upper limit of fifty pages. Please refer to General Principles, §8 and §9 pertaining to formatting details.
- b) The Bibliography should be prepared as per the rules of style in the latest edition of Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students & Researchers*. Available in the St. Augustine's Seminary Library and SAS Website: [http://www.staugustines.on.ca/library/academic\\_writing\\_resources](http://www.staugustines.on.ca/library/academic_writing_resources).
- c) The Survey of Literature will be a HY course worth one credit [starts in September and ends in April].

## 2. AN EXTENDED RESEARCH PAPER

### Background and purpose

Like the MTS Thesis option, this paper should demonstrate appropriate academic skills in the use of primary sources and a sound critical appreciation of the secondary literature on the chosen topic. It should demonstrate familiarity with the significant issues raised by the topic, and the range of possible differences in interpretation in dealing with those issues. It should reflect a capacity for independent judgment, scholarly argument, and good expository writing. It need not make an original contribution to knowledge.

The Extended Research Paper is worth one credit. Unlike the Thesis, the Extended Research Paper requires only a faculty supervisor, and no second reader.

If the student is full-time, it is recommended that a faculty supervisor and topic be selected by the end of the first academic year in order to provide sufficient time for the research needed to submit a proposal to the Faculty Supervisor in October.

### Specific guidelines

1. The most common error in this kind of paper is defining a thesis topic too broadly. The topic must be specific enough to enable the student to engage in a thorough, systematic and intensive study of the relevant sources, and, in principle, to be able to provide persuasive evidence for every statement that the thesis makes.
2. The Extended Research Paper proposal, to be submitted to the faculty supervisor the first week of October, should include the following information:
  - a. The title of the proposed paper.

- b. A brief statement (typically one sentence in length) representing the thesis to be demonstrated. It is understood that the thesis may well undergo revision in the course of research and writing, but it is important to have a goal in view as a way of focusing the investigation.
  - c. An indication of the primary literature that will be used, why this literature is deemed relevant, and the method or methods which will be used to interpret and make use of the primary source material.
  - d. The proposal should indicate the *status quaestionis*, that is, the current state of scholarly enquiry concerning the topic, including areas of general agreement and areas of specific disagreement. The student should indicate how the proposed paper would be related to the *status quaestionis*.
  - e. Any necessary background, such as methodological considerations, the historical context of the proposed topic, or the wider implications of the proposed study. Occasionally a student may want to offer more personal reasons for selecting the proposed topic.
  - f. A working bibliography should be submitted. In principle, the student should already at this point be aware of all the relevant materials and literature on the chosen topic.
  - g. The Extended Research Paper proposal is usually from two to three pages in length, plus bibliography.
3. The paper should be clearly organized. All parts of the paper should contribute directly or indirectly to demonstrating, clarifying, illustrating, or contextualizing the thesis statement. The demonstration of the thesis should proceed coherently. There should be an introduction, an exposition, and a conclusion. Chapter divisions are optional.
- a) The Extended Research Paper will normally be thirty to forty pages in length with an upper limit of fifty pages. Please refer to General Principles, §8 and §9 pertaining to formatting details.
  - b) The Bibliography must distinguish between works cited and works consulted. The Bibliography should be prepared as per the rules of style in the latest edition of Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students & Researchers*. Available in the St. Augustine's Seminary Library and SAS Website: [http://www.staugustines.on.ca/library/academic\\_writing\\_resources](http://www.staugustines.on.ca/library/academic_writing_resources).
  - c) The Extended Research Paper will be a HY course worth one credit [starts in September and ends in April].

Faculty Compensation – this information is included in the ***Policy Statement on Salary for Faculty***, *Addendum 3*, and *Addendum 8, iv., (e), (f), (g)*.