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2022-2023
STUDENT HANDBOOK
ADDENDUM 1:
MASTER OF ARTS
TERMINAL THESIS OR PROJECT

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Addendum 1: MASTER OF ARTS TERMINAL THESIS OR PROJECT

All Master of Arts students must complete either a terminal thesis or project as part of their degree program. Students completing a thesis will have an academic focus. Students completing a project will have a professional focus. This thesis or project is completed in the last year of study under the direction of an NBTS faculty member. This part of the program involves independent work for the student. Students will regularly meet with their thesis/project advisor and submit work for comments and improvements.

Students with 0-24 credits

Students should meet once a semester with their advisor. MATS students should consider a concentration. The concentrations and the requirements are:

Biblical Studies Concentration: All required MATS classes and six Biblical Studies (18 credits) courses, and a Research Paper or Project/Additional Course. If seeking to continue to the Ph.D. level, students should take Hebrew and Greek as part of the concentration.

Theology and Public Policy Concentration: All required MATS classes and Christian Experience and Witness (IN520), Contextualized Ministry and Public Faith (IN 521), and four classes (12 credits) of electives and a Research Paper or Project and Course.

Ministry in the Church Concentration: All required MATS classes and Introduction to Pastoral Care (PC510), Introduction to Worship (WP510); Sermon Preparation (PR510), Called and Equipped (MS 520), and two classes (6 credits) of electives, and a Research Paper or Project and Course.

Individualized Concentration: Required MATS classes and 18 credits (6 courses) developed with your faculty advisor.

MATS students can declare a major at any point, but it is best to do so as soon as possible. Students should also begin the discernment process for their terminal thesis or project during the first 24 credits of work in the program. Students should read through this document and discuss which option is best for them with their advisor.

The students should also discuss with the faculty advisor the best research methods class for their selected thesis or project (see below).

Research Methods Class Options for Students:

MAPCC students take the required Research Methods in Pastoral Care (PC511) designed for projects and thesis in their field.

The Biblical Research and Writing (BR520) is required for all MATS students writing a thesis or project in Biblical Studies, History of Christianity, or Theology. *However*, depending on the thesis or project selected, a student, with the permission of their advisor and the Dean, can substitute PC 511 or PC711 for BR520 if it is determined to be advantageous for the student's preparation for a social science-based thesis or project.

Students may petition the Dean's office, with the approval of their advisor, to reconfigure the required course sequences if such a change would advance their study in the discipline in which they hope to write their thesis.

Students with 24-36 credits

Students should decide between the thesis and project with their advisor and be reassigned, if needed, to the faculty member best suited to be their thesis/project director.

The students should also begin thinking about the topic for the thesis/project and discuss it with their advisor. The topic should be selected, and some independent reading should start the year and summer before the thesis/project work begins.

Ordinarily, students will complete the work on a thesis or project during the Fall and Spring of their last year of the program. Occasionally, students will begin the process in the Spring of one academic year and complete the process in the Fall of the next academic year.

Students with 36-48 credits or in the last year of the program

This year the students will work with the faculty advisor to complete either the thesis or the project using the instructions below.

Option One: Thesis (MATS or rarely PCC)

Definition: A thesis is an academic research paper on a topic of interest to the student. The thesis is an original research work designed and written by the student that demonstrates the student's ability to

- engage in the review or existing literature on the topic,

- conduct either original literary commentary or engage in a research topic, and collect, organize, and present their original research
- discuss the implications of your research and draw conclusions

This type of thesis work requires self-discipline and demonstrates the student's ability to engage in scholarly discourse, complete a substantial project, and communicate the results of your research to others.

Benefits of a Master's Thesis

MATS students who plan to continue their studies beyond the master's level should choose the thesis option. The thesis demonstrates the student's ability to engage in the type of research required at the doctoral level. Students in the MAPCC should consult their advisor on the best option for their future.

A thesis is chosen by students who enjoy intensive and independent research. This research can be text-based (biblical and historical studies) or use social sciences to address a complex issue or problem. The thesis also gives the student an extended mentorship with one of the faculty members.

Structure/Format – A MA thesis template will be used for all MATS Students writing a thesis. A Master's thesis is to be **50–60 pages (12500-15000 words) (maximum of 75 pages or 18750 words)**. The latest edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) is to be followed in all matters of style, format, footnotes, and bibliography, except where the NBTS Style Guide indicates otherwise. The standard template can be found in the documents and resources of the Theological Writing Center.

Faculty advisors may specify another method of scholarly conventions for notations if that style is the standard in the student's area of interest. If another method is selected, the faculty member must contact the Theological Writing Center to assure standardization of the form, and that exception is noted for the student.

It is understood that the writing will be careful and of publishable quality.

Phase 1: Thesis Proposal: The topic of the thesis and two to five paragraphs describing the project will be turned in to the faculty advisor by **week seven of the first semester**. This is called an Abstract. The Abstract will be further developed throughout the thesis process as the thesis is further developed. It presents all the significant elements of the work in a highly condensed form, i.e., the thesis statement, a brief introduction, a summary of how the issue will be addressed, and possible implications. (See the template for more information).

Phase 2: Researching and Writing the Thesis

Phase 2: further development of the Thesis should include:

- The Abstract
- Preliminary Introduction,
- Literature Review Chapter
- Preliminary Chapter on the Research Design and Methods
- Bibliography developed to this point

This longer thesis-in-progress should be accompanied by any surveys, questionnaires, oral history or observational prompts, archives to be consulted, or critical sources for further exploration. **Phase 2 of the thesis is due to the faculty advisor at the conclusion of the first semester.** Note: while this is the minimum due to the advisor at the end of the first semester, the entire thesis will be due eleven weeks into the second semester, so plan accordingly.

During the entire thesis process, the student should be in regular contact with the professor (i.e., weekly or bi-weekly meetings) and engage in the writing groups offered by the Theological Writing Center.

During the first semester, the faculty member and the student should work with the Dean to secure a second reader for the thesis or project. This second thesis reader is ordinarily another NBTS faculty member or a faculty-designated DMin graduate. Phase 1 of the thesis will be shared with the second reader and the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Theses that involve “human subjects” (working with and collecting data from communities via surveys, case studies, observations, interviews, etc.) require special attention to protect participants. As a researcher, the student bears responsibility for how their research affects participating individuals and communities.

In conformity with “The Common Rule” guidelines established by the U.S. Government Office of Human Research Protections and general practice in academic research, NBTS requires **all** research that is formally conducted as part of a project or thesis to be reviewed by the IRB to protect human subjects and minimize potential risks or harm. The Common Rule, formally entitled “Protection of Human Subjects” is part 46 of Title 45 of the Code of Federal Regulations (“45 CFR 46”). Thus, when a student conducts research that includes participants, s/he must account for how s/he is protecting participants from harm. Harm can include loss of confidentiality, negative personal or professional repercussions from participation, or emotional harm. Only after the research receives IRB approval, the student can implement the research.

The advisor will assign a Pass/Fail grade for the first three credits of the thesis/project done in the first term, providing the student has submitted a successful phase I thesis. This pass/fail grade will change when the final grade for the whole thesis is submitted to the Registrar.

Phase 3: Completion of the Thesis: In the second semester, the student should complete the research and write-up of the remaining thesis. **All materials should be submitted as a final product of 50-60 pages (12500-15000 words) with a 75 page or 18750 words maximum—see style sheet for specifics).** The complete thesis must be submitted to the advisor and second reader no later than week 11 of the second semester. The template can be found on the Theological Writing Center Brightspace site.

It is also highly recommended that students submit sections and/or chapters to the faculty advisor and second reader throughout the second semester. Most theses require extensive editing as the student replies to questions and comments from the faculty advisor and second reader, so it is essential to allow time to edit the project.

Phase 4: Thesis Defense:

In weeks 12-14, the student will defend the thesis and make the final grammatical edits required by the committee and the library staff.

The second-semester course grade of three credits will be assigned a letter grade, agreed upon by the advisor and second reader.

A copy of the successfully defended thesis may be housed in the library of the Seminary.

Important Dates for Students and Advisors in the Thesis process

- **Week Seven of the First Semester:** Abstract must be submitted. Faculty and student should assign a second reader by this week.
- **End of the First Semester:** Phase 2 of the thesis should be submitted to the advisor, second reader, and IRB no later than the last day of the semester.
- **Week 11 of the Second Semester:** Phase 3, the entire thesis must be submitted to the faculty advisor and the second reader. If this draft is deemed acceptable, the thesis defense will be scheduled.
- **Weeks 12-13 of the second semester:** The thesis defense will be scheduled, and the final editing of the thesis will be done,

Option Two: Project (MATS)

Students who plan to apply their studies in a contextual setting should choose to develop a project as part of their MATS program. This is a two-semester project. In the first semester, the student will enroll in an NBTS course or a directed study for three credits. This course will

involve the research portion of the thesis and will provide the needed study and background for the project.

This option prioritizes a creative output or development of an artistic asset, digital resources, teaching tools, worship resources, interpretive work, advocacy platforms, or community engagement. This option allows the student to

- Complete one semester of field education or work with a supervisor in the field, in collaboration with the faculty advisor, to design a project.
- Develop and research the project for use in a church or other non-profit organization.
- Research the identified topics and provide an academic foundation for the project.

This project design allows students to bring a range of their gifts and passions to their research and help them address contextually relevant questions about their faith traditions, worship communities, or social and cultural organizations.

Specific parameters and implementation must be discussed and approved in consultation with the project advisor (faculty advisor or field education supervisor).

Projects must include a formal writeup of no less than 20-30 pages (5000 – 7500 words) (50 pages or 12500 words maximum) and will be evaluated on the following components:

1. An introduction of the topic or themes explored through the project and a guiding thesis statement or research question at the project's core.
2. Engagement with scholarship that informs the project, with a discussion of critical thinkers and scholarly sources that speak to or are reflected in the project. This must include the development and inclusion of a significant bibliography.
3. Discussion of their development of the creative output or artistic asset, digital resource, teaching tool, or community engagement.
4. Discuss how the project addresses or advances thought or work in or is responsive to a particular discipline. Students shall indicate how disciplinary perspectives and methods are identified and discussed in the project. These may include theology, philosophy, history, biblical studies, preaching and liturgical studies, Christian education, pastoral care and counseling, anthropology, social sciences, cultural studies, fine arts, or performance studies.
5. Critical reflections on contextual relevance of the project, its design, and its implementation, learnings and outcomes, or implications for further study and practices.
6. A complete bibliography

Possible projects could include, but are not limited to:

- Podcasts,

- digital humanities resources like timelines,
- geospatial analysis platforms,
- arts-based projects like community-based artistic interventions (dance, poetry, spoken word, visual arts, etc.),
- liturgical resources, public/church community installations around a particular theme,
- film-based resources,
- faith community or community education curriculum tools or resources,
- community engagement or advocacy events or resources,
- oral histories or archival preservation or content management work,
- or some other resource created for church or public audiences.

Prior to phase 1, the students and advisor must discuss the project and determine the class or directed study for phase 1 of the project. Students should meet regularly with their advisor during this preliminary period. **The required template for MATS projects can be found on the Theological Writing Center site in Brightspace.**

Phase 1: Project Proposal and Field Education Supervisor appointment: During this first semester, the students and faculty advisor will identify a field education supervisor to direct the practical aspects of the project.

Also, during this first semester, the student is either enrolled in an NBTS class or a directed study that will allow the student to begin to research both the academic background and the practical aspects of the project. Students should also meet regularly with their advisor or field education supervisor during the semester and discuss their progress in their study.

Students **must provide a 1- page proposal abstract of the project by week seven of the first semester.** The abstract will consist of the thesis statement for the project and two to five paragraphs describing the project, including all the significant elements of the work in a highly condensed form, i.e., the thesis statement, a brief introduction, a summary of how the issue will be addressed, and possible implications of the work. (See the template for more information).

Phase 2: further development of the project should include:

- The Abstract
- Preliminary Introduction
- Literature Review Chapter
- Preliminary Chapter on the Research Design and Methods or process
- Bibliography developed to this point

This longer project-in-progress should be accompanied by any surveys, questionnaires, oral history or observational prompts, archives to be consulted, or critical sources for further exploration. **Phase 2 of the project is due to the faculty advisor at the conclusion of the first**

semester. Note: while this is the minimum due to the advisor at the end of the first semester, the entire thesis will be due eleven weeks into the second semester, so plan accordingly.

During the entire project process, the student should be in regular contact with the professor (i.e., weekly or bi-weekly meetings) and engage in the writing groups offered by the Theological Writing Center.

Projects that involve “human subjects” (working with and collecting data from communities via surveys, case studies, observations, interviews, etc.) require special attention to protect participants. The student as researcher is responsible for how his or her research affects participating individuals and communities.

In conformity with “The Common Rule” guidelines established by the U.S. Government Office of Human Research Protections and general practice in academic research, NBTS requires **all** research that is formally conducted as part of a project or thesis to be reviewed by the IRB to protect human subjects and minimize potential risks or harm. The Common Rule, formally entitled “Protection of Human Subjects” is part 46 of Title 45 of the Code of Federal Regulations (“45 CFR 46”). Thus, when a student conducts research that includes participants, s/he must account for how s/he is protecting those participants from harm. Harm can include loss of confidentiality, negative personal or professional repercussions from participation, or emotional harm. Once an applicable thesis receives IRB approval, the student may implement the research.

Phase 3: Completion of the Project: In the second semester, the advisor and field supervisor will work with the student to complete the research project.

All materials should be submitted as a final product no later than week 11 of the second semester.

Phase 4: Defense of the Project: In weeks 12-13, the student will defend the project and make the final grammatical edits required by the committee and the library staff.

It is also highly recommended that students submit sections to the faculty advisor and field supervisor throughout the semester. Most projects require extensive editing as the student replies to questions and comments from the faculty advisor and second reader, so it is essential to allow time to edit the project.

The project class will be assigned a letter grade, as agreed upon by the advisor and field supervisor.

A copy of the successfully defended project may be housed in the library of the Seminary.

Important Dates for Students and Advisors in the Project process

- **Week Seven of the First Semester:** Abstract must be submitted. Faculty and student should assign a field supervisor by this week.
- **End of the First Semester:** Phase 2 of the project should be submitted to the advisor, second reader, and IRB no later than the last day of the semester.
- **Week 11 of the Second Semester:** Phase 3, the entire project must be submitted to the faculty advisor and the field supervisor. If this draft is deemed acceptable, the thesis defense will be scheduled.
- **Weeks 12-13 of the second semester:** The thesis defense will be scheduled, and the final editing of the thesis will be done.

MASTER OF ARTS (Pastoral Care and Counseling)

TERMINAL PROJECT

Definition: A MAPCC project is more specific than a MATS project. It involves engaging in original research, often using human subjects. A MAPCC project is also considered an academic project and has a significant research component.

The construction and writing of a research project is an option offered to all students in the MA concentration in Pastoral Care and Counseling/Pastoral Theology, depending upon the student's interest. The project shall consist of the write-up of a significant action research project in ministry and investigates some topic of significance to theological study, and demonstrates the student's creative competence in the field of Pastoral Care and Counseling/Pastoral Theology. It must represent a carefully conceived, researched, and executed project.

Structure/Format –Students will use the project template and Style Guide to develop and present their project. **The project will be 40-50 pages with a 65-page maximum.** The bibliography, notes, and all other matters of style and form matters, any other issues shall follow the most recent edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), except when the NBTs Style Guide indicates otherwise. If other scholarly conventions prevail in the student's area of interest, the advisor may specify another manual or style sheet. If another method is selected, the faculty member must contact the Theological Writing Center to assure standardization of form, and that exception is noted for the student.

It is understood that the writing will be careful and of publishable quality.

Prior to beginning the project: Project Development and Initial Registration: A student learns the process of social-scientific research in the Research Methods for Pastoral Care (PC511). It is advised that the student explore their interest in the project during the Research Methods course, which should be taken prior to the final semester of the MA(PCC) program.

Normally during the semester prior to the student's final academic year in the MA(PCC) program, they shall register for the directed study course (PC592), under the supervision of their advisor, to implement and write up the Project.

Phase 1: Directed Study of Project: Students enrolled in PC592 will engage in the research for the project selected over the first semester.

Students **must provide a 1- page proposal abstract of the project by week seven of the first semester.** The abstract will consist of the thesis statement for the project and two to five paragraphs describing the project, including all the major elements of the project in a highly condensed form, i.e., the thesis statement, a brief introduction, a summary of how the issue will be addressed, and possible implications of the work. (See the template for more information).

Phase 2: further development of the project should include:

- The Abstract
- Preliminary Introduction
- Literature Review
- Preliminary Chapter on the Research Design and Methods or process
- Bibliography developed to this point

This longer project-in-progress should be accompanied by any surveys, questionnaires, oral history or observational prompts, archives to be consulted, or critical sources for further exploration. **Phase 2 of the project is due to the faculty advisor at the conclusion of the first semester.** Note: while this is the minimum due to the advisor at the end of the first semester, the entire thesis will be due eleven weeks into the second semester, so plan accordingly.

During the entire project process, the student should be in regular contact with the professor (i.e., weekly or bi-weekly meetings) and engage in the writing groups offered by the Theological Writing Center.

During the first semester, the faculty member and the student should work with the Dean to secure a second reader for the thesis or project. This second thesis reader is ordinarily another NBTS faculty member or a faculty-designated DMin graduate. Phase 1 of the thesis will be shared with the second reader and the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Projects that involve “human subjects” (working with and collecting data from communities via surveys, case studies, observations, interviews, etc.) require special attention to protect participants. The student as researcher is responsible for how his or her research affects participating individuals and communities.

In conformity with “The Common Rule” guidelines established by the U.S. Government Office of Human Research Protections and general practice in academic research, NBTS requires **all** research that is formally conducted as part of a project or thesis to be reviewed by the IRB to protect human subjects and minimize potential risks or harm. The Common Rule, formally entitled “Protection of Human Subjects” is part 46 of Title 45 of the Code of Federal Regulations (“45 CFR 46”). Thus, when a student conducts research that includes participants, s/he must account for how s/he is protecting those participants from harm. Harm can include loss of confidentiality, negative personal or professional repercussions from participation, or emotional harm. Once an applicable thesis receives IRB approval, the student may implement the research.

The advisor will assign a letter grade for this three-credit directed study course based on the quality of the required materials.

Phase 3: Completion of the Project: In the second semester, the advisor and the second reader will work with the student to complete the research and write-up of the remaining project. **The project will be 40-50 pages (10000 – 12500 words) with a 65-page (16250 words) maximum. The complete thesis must be submitted to the advisor and second reader no later than week 11 of the second semester.**

It is also highly recommended that students submit sections and/or chapters to the faculty advisor and second reader throughout the second semester. Most theses require extensive editing as the student replies to questions and comments from the faculty advisor and second reader, so it is essential to allow time to edit the project.

Phase 4: Project Defense:

In weeks 12-14, the student will defend the thesis and make the final grammatical edits required by the committee and the library staff. At this point, the project form is completed by the faculty advisor.

After the successful review of the project, the student shall submit one copy of the project to his/her advisor prior to the day of Commencement.

Important Dates for Students and Advisors in the Project process

- **Week Seven of the First Semester:** Abstract must be submitted. Faculty and student should assign a second reader by this week.
- **End of the First Semester:** Phase 2 of the project should be submitted to the advisor, second reader, and IRB no later than the last day of the semester.
- **Week 11 of the Second Semester:** Phase 3, the entire project must be submitted to the faculty advisor and the second reader. If this draft is deemed acceptable, the thesis defense will be scheduled.
- **Weeks 12-13 of the second semester:** The thesis defense will be scheduled, and the final editing of the thesis will be done.