

# MASTER'S THESIS GUIDELINES

Anderson University School of Theology, Anderson, Indiana

*April 17, 2014*

## Master's Thesis Guidelines

### A. The Thesis Project

1. General Nature of the Thesis: The goal of a thesis is to permit the student an opportunity to engage in focused academic research at the culmination of their degree program. The M.T.S. thesis shall be in one of the academic disciplines of biblical studies, historical studies, or theological studies, though a well-written thesis will demonstrate the ability to synthesize all three areas. For other master degree students, research may also include pastoral theology. The thesis is intended to be a major, original research project that explores a theme in an academic area within the School of Theology's curriculum. It should make a contribution to the understanding of the academy regarding the chosen topic. This must be original research and not work already presented in another context, whether academic or otherwise. As an academic document, it is expected to meet these basic requirements:
  - a. Extensive research
  - b. Well substantiated and carefully documented analyses and conclusions
  - c. Coherent and substantially informed by biblical, historical, and theological perspectives
  - d. A quality of superior literary expression.
2. Technical Nature of the Work: The project culminates in the production of the Thesis, a document 20,000-25,000 words in length (excluding such things as footnotes, bibliography, front matter, graphs, charts or research instruments). The bibliography should include a minimum of at least forty scholarly resources consulted in the research for the Thesis. The Thesis is to be written in the form set forth in Kate L. Turabian, *et. al.*, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 8<sup>th</sup> edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). Whereas two types of citations are discussed in Section 15.3, for School of Theology's theses you are to follow and use the footnote/bibliography style (15.3.1 and Chapters 16-17).
3. Candidates for any Master Degree may elect to write a thesis within the framework of allowed elective hours in her or his degree program. The thesis carries three hours of academic credit consisting of a two-part "package" which includes the course in Research and Design (one hours academic credit), followed by enrollment in the Thesis course (two hours). A thesis fee is required at the time that the student registers for the Thesis course.
4. Beginning the Thesis: a student is not to begin formal writing of the Thesis ***until after receiving approval*** of the Thesis Proposal from the School of Theology's Academic Cabinet.

### B. Development of the Proposal

1. Remember, as a student of the School of Theology, student and faculty agree to the "Covenant to Use Inclusive Language" in all written submissions, and this applies to all Thesis proposals and Theses as well. Please consult the *School of Theology Student Handbook*, Appendix B if you have any questions concerning this policy.
2. A student intending to write a thesis at the Master's level should enroll in BIST/HCUS/THST/PAST 5900 Research Design: Principles and Skills (student selects one caption for this course in area of interest) during their first semester at the School of Theology. During this course, the student will identify and compose a

- thesis proposal that may guide the student's course of study and research while a student at the School of Theology. This is not to constitute the proposal submitted to the Academic Cabinet for approval but constitutes a "first draft" allowing the student the opportunity to explore the proposed topic and to identify and to begin employing the appropriate methodologies for research for the proposed topic.
3. At the beginning of the student's second (for an M.T.S. student) or third (for an M.Div. student) year of study, the student, in consultation with their advisor and any other appropriate faculty members, will identify the specific topic and research question that the thesis will explore. It is important for the student to recall that this research is to be of value to the larger academic community and is not to be merely an idiosyncratic exposition. The student should identify areas of gaps in current understandings into which the proposed research may add a meaningful perspective, either in terms of primary understandings or in terms of methodological approach.
  4. In consultation with the advisor and other appropriate School of Theology faculty members, a list of possible Thesis Committee members will be identified. It is the responsibility of the student to contact the proposed Thesis Committee members and solicit their participation. At this point in time, the thesis Chairperson should be selected in consultation with the advisor and appropriate School of Theology faculty members whose background and research interests are most closely attuned to the proposed thesis topic. At times, it may be appropriate to solicit participation from scholars outside of the University. However, it is imperative that at least one member of the Thesis Committee *must* be a member of the School of Theology faculty. It is only in this manner that the School of Theology faculty can affirm that the thesis constitutes graduate-level research worthy of granting of the degree.
  5. In consultation with the Thesis Committee members, the student will produce a formal Thesis Proposal for submission to the School of Theology Academic Cabinet. The proposal should be 12-15 pages in length, proffering consideration of the research issue(s) the project will redress and the methodologies to be employed. In addition, it should begin to demonstrate how the proposed research will add to the body of knowledge and understanding through the project. It should include likely research methodologies to be employed, a suggested chapter outline, and the projected completion date of the various chapters in the project. An Annotated Bibliography of not less than 20 resources that the student has reviewed and found relevant for the proposed research project will be included.
  6. The Thesis Proposal Title Page should include a suggested title for the project and includes the student's name and date submitted.
  7. The Thesis Proposal will indicate that the proposed research is the work of the student and has not been done in another context, academic or otherwise.
  8. After completion of the Thesis Proposal, the student must submit the Proposal to the Academic Cabinet as well as the form "Thesis or Project Approval Application." The Academic Cabinet bears the responsibility to approve the proposal as submitted, to return it to the student for greater clarification or corrections, or to reject the proposal. There is no guarantee that the proposal should or must be approved by the Academic Cabinet. Its members ultimately bear responsibility to insure that any thesis achieves the *academic standards* required of an MTS thesis. If the Academic Cabinet does not approve a proposal, the Thesis Committee Chairperson will communicate the

concerns of the Academic Cabinet to the student and the requirements for redressing these concerns. After making the required changes, the student may resubmit the proposal to the Academic Cabinet. If the student is unable or unwilling to make the required changes, the student may either switch to the M.T.S. Non-thesis program and sit for the M.T.S. Comprehensive Exams, or complete another program's requirements that do not require the production of a Master's thesis.

### C. Production of the Thesis

1. When the Academic Cabinet approves a Thesis Proposal, it then becomes the responsibility of the student to produce successfully a thesis deserving of the degree awarded. Since the Thesis is a reflection not only of the student but also of the School of Theology and Anderson University, the Thesis Committee must insist on maintaining superior quality research and writing in the Thesis they oversee.
2. The student may then enroll in BIST/HCUS/THST 7950 (for MTS Thesis students) or BIST/HCUS/PAST/THST 7950 (for other Master Thesis students). The appropriate Departmental caption will be chosen in consultation with the Thesis Committee Chairperson. Upon enrolling for the Thesis writing course, a fee will be assessed to cover thesis submission, binding, and other related fees.
3. If the Thesis is not completed by the end of the semester in which the student originally enrolls in the Thesis writing course, the following semester the student is required to enroll in BIST/HCUS/PAST/THST 7955, a one-hour Thesis continuation course. The Thesis continuation course may be retaken once (thus the research and writing of the Thesis should be completed in no more than three semesters). If a student fails to complete the Thesis in this timeframe, the student may continue to research and write the Thesis but must petition the Academic Cabinet for permission to submit the Thesis when it is finished. However, this should only be contemplated in the event of exigent circumstances, and should not be considered as a normative path to earning the degree. The Academic Cabinet is not required to readmit a student to submit a Thesis if there are no extenuating or exceptional circumstances.
4. As an academic rather than a professional degree, the Thesis must be submitted and approved by the end of the seventh year from the date in which the student entered the program. Failure to complete the Thesis in this timeframe will result in the student being required to take additional courses to remain academically current.
5. Summer semesters are not included in this timeframe, and Faculty has no necessity to guide thesis work over the summer unless previous permission has been gained from the Thesis Committee Chairperson and the Dean of the School of Theology.
6. As the student finishes each chapter, copies should be sent to the members of one's Thesis Committee for evaluation and feedback. **Do not write the complete thesis and only then solicit advice and assistance from the Thesis Committee.** To do so is to risk having the thesis not approved. Any methodological or stylistic errors are more easily corrected from the beginning instead of compounding the errors throughout the thesis.
7. It is incumbent upon the Thesis Committee members to supply their critiques or concerns regarding the Thesis to the student in a timely manner (usually no longer than two weeks after receiving a chapter). It is expected that the committee members

- will provide feedback on both substantive and mechanical matters. Comments from committee readers should be returned to both the student and the chairperson.
8. The student must keep in mind that Thesis Committee members have other responsibilities and cannot put everything else aside in order to do “*last minute*” work for the participant. The maintenance of agreed-upon time lines is of ultimate importance.
  9. Turabian permits the use of “General Exceptions” that are established by an academic institution. For an SOT thesis, other than single-spacing footnotes and centering page numbers at the bottom of the page, no exceptions are to be made to the approved Turabian style. Remember to employ the footnote-bibliography format for citations.
  10. While the student may solicit assistance from others regarding *style* in the Thesis, the student is prohibited from soliciting assistance for *content* from others unless the student identifies clearly how these resources help to affirm the thesis submitted. All of the work for the Thesis must be that of the student herself or himself.
  11. Any and all resources consulted for the Thesis must be properly cited and identified. Any demonstrable case of the use of an undocumented source (*viz.*, plagiarism) will never be tolerated and may result in the failure of the Thesis and the student’s expulsion from the School of Theology. While the MTS is an academic degree, it is offered within the context of a worshipping Christian community, so that academic dishonesty is not merely an academic failure but the disruption of Christian community and faith. Accordingly, if a student has a question as to whether or not to cite a source, the student should err on the side of caution and cite a source even if it may be somewhat peripheral to the student’s argument.
  12. The Thesis will use the Times New Romans font, with 12 pt. text in the front matter, body, and bibliography, but may use 10 pt. text for footnotes if approved by the Thesis Committee.
  13. All text (including the Abstract) must be double spaced and printed on one side of the page. Exceptions: When an entry in the Table of Contents, List of Figures and List of Tables is longer than one line, that entry is single-spaced. When a chapter, section, or sub-section heading is longer than one line, that entry is single-spaced. Bibliographic references and long quotations are single spaced but double-spaced between entries. Do not use italics or script fonts for the general body of the document.
  14. The Thesis must include an Abstract. For the abstract, succinctness in presentation is always preferable to overly wordy abstracts. The abstract will be included for publication in the Masters Abstracts International (MAI), which is the primary source for citations and abstracts for masters theses and other masters degree projects in North America. MAI is also the source for master’s degree information in the Dissertation Abstracts database. Published every other month, this print index provides 150-word, author-written abstracts of masters theses, educational specialist materials, and other projects accepted for degrees by accredited colleges and universities. In the abstract, you must (1) present the research problem issue of your thesis, (2) discuss the materials and method(s) used in your analysis, and (3) state the conclusions reached. Individual chapters should not have abstracts. This should be placed in the *Front Matter* (see Turabian, 375-398) preceding the text of the Thesis.
  15. All page numbers should be placed bottom center with a 1” margin beneath except for the first page of each chapter. The Thesis’ title page, signature page, the copyright

- page, the Table of Contents, and the abstract page(s) do not have page numbers, but they are counted. In the Table of Contents, count these pages using Roman numerals (i, ii, iii). The first page of the Introduction or Chapter 1 begins with the Arabic number 1. All pages are numbered consecutively from that point.
16. The Thesis must use footnotes for all citations. Footnotes will begin renumbering with 1 at the beginning of each new chapter. Footnotes may be continued on the next page, but must begin on the page they are cited. Endnotes are not permitted.
  17. If your dissertation includes figures (illustrations) or tables, you must include a List of Figures and a List of Tables to be placed after the Table of Contents. Figures (illustrations) and tables may be placed on separate pages with the figure or table number and caption placed either beneath the illustration or on the preceding (facing) page. Tables and Figures must fall within the specified margins.
  18. For the purpose of binding, all pages in the thesis must be formatted with a 1.5 inch margin on the left, and a one inch margin on the top, right side, and bottom. There must be a 1" margin beneath bottom page numbers. However, the text's margins should not be justified. All text in the thesis, including footnotes, page numbers, tables, figures (illustrations), and figure legends, must fall within these margins.
  19. Regarding the use of materials copyrighted by another person(s), as the author of the Thesis you will be asked to certify that any previously copyrighted material used in your work, beyond "fair use," is with the written permission of the copyright owner. Please refer to *Copyright Law & Graduate Research: New Media, New Rights and Your Dissertation* by Dr. Kenneth Crews.  
The United States Copyright Office is another valuable resource for any question you may have concerning previously published work: <http://www.copyright.gov/>.  
Book and journal publishers normally hold the copyright for all materials they publish. Even if you are the sole author or one of several authors of material in a published book or journal, you must obtain written permission from the copyright holder if you are including this material in your Thesis. The student is responsible for securing these permissions, paying any permission fees, and submitting copies of all permissions to the School of Theology and library when the Thesis is delivered to Nicholson Library for binding.

#### D. Thesis Defense

1. After completion of the Thesis and in consultation with the Thesis Committee chair and members, a defense of the Thesis shall be scheduled. It is imperative that the library's representative, Dr. Janet Brewer or her assigned designate, be notified of the time and date of the defense and her participation is required to insure that the Thesis adequately reflects the Thesis process.
2. In order to permit adequate time to redress any issues or concerns raised during the Defense, the Defense must be scheduled no later than **March 1** of the year in which the student intends to graduate. Students must have the finished project to their committee and the library by this date. The defense must be completed no later than **March 25** of the year in which the student intends to graduate.
3. The Thesis Defense is a public, academic occasion. Other interested parties in the community may attend, and the student is welcome to invite special guests or interested parties to attend the Defense. As an academic occasion for the University,

- other departments and schools should be notified when the date and time of the Thesis Defense has been determined. Either through an email announcement or through posting in public areas on campus, it is the responsibility of the Thesis Committee Chair to insure that the broader academic community of Anderson University as well as any other parties who might benefit from the Thesis Defense be notified at least one week prior to the date of the Thesis Defense.
4. The Thesis Committee Chairperson will serve as convener of the Thesis Defense. The Chairperson will advise the School of Theology administration as to the time and date of the Defense. The Chairperson, in addition, will secure a location from the administration that does not conflict with other uses of classrooms.
  5. While the Thesis Defense will focus primarily upon the Thesis' content, the student may be asked questions to demonstrate sufficient background knowledge for the Thesis as well. If the student fails to address adequately these issues, the Thesis will be rejected by the Thesis Committee.
  6. The student will deliver a 20-25 minute presentation summarizing the Thesis, methodologies employed, conclusions, and areas for further research.
  7. The Thesis Committee will then have the opportunity to address questions to the student. These may include questions about the Thesis' content, methodologies, suggestions or corrections.
  8. If the Thesis Committee chooses to do so, others in attendance at the Defense may be permitted to pose questions. In such instances, it remains the Chairperson's responsibility to maintain decorum and the academic integrity of the event. If any Committee members or the degree candidate think that the Thesis Committee Chairperson is not upholding academic decorum, then it is incumbent upon this person or persons to make such concerns known. This will in no way prejudice the Committee members regarding the awarding of the degree.
  9. The Thesis Defense should not exceed two hours in length, unless there are identifiable reasons for an extended defense. The weight of any exception must be upon those who seek to extend the defense beyond the maximum time length, and must never prejudice the awarding of a degree. It is incumbent upon the Thesis Chairperson to insure a fair academic exploration of the Thesis' position(s).
  10. At the conclusion of the Thesis Defense, the student and everyone other than the Thesis Committee members and Nicholson Library representative are excused from the room. The Thesis Committee is then required to adjudicate the Thesis' overall value, and must determine whether or not it meets the requirements for the awarding of the degree. The Thesis Committee may decide that the Thesis adequately fulfills the requirements for the awarding of the degree (High Pass, Pass), may decide that the Thesis can be passable with substantive corrections or rewrites (Low Pass), or may decide that the Thesis does not meet the minimum requirements for the awarding of the degree (Fail).
  11. For a Thesis that is sufficient for the awarding of the degree (High Pass, Pass, Low Pass), the Thesis Committee is authorized to decide how to redress corrections or changes that are required prior to submission of the final form of the Thesis to Nicholson Library. The Chairperson, in consultation with the other members of the Thesis Committee, will determine the obligatory steps to submit the Thesis for the degree. Corrections and rewrites may be reviewed by the Thesis Committee

Chairperson or by the whole Committee and the Nicholson Library representative. If a Thesis submission fails to redress adequately the required changes, then it is the Chairperson's responsibility to contact the student and inform the student that the degree cannot be awarded.

E. Submission of the Completed Thesis in Final Form

1. By April 15 of the year in which the student intends to graduate, two copies of the Thesis with required corrections from the Defense must be submitted to Nicholson Library in a finished format for binding. Make sure that all pages of the Thesis are submitted, as the most common mistake is a failure to submit the whole Thesis with corrections.
2. Include in the thesis Front Matter an abstract of approximately 350 words (see Turabian, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition).
3. The Title Page, Copyright Page, and Signature Page are to be completed according to the exemplars at the conclusion of this Guide.
4. For the two final, corrected copies of the Thesis delivered to Nicholson Library for binding, the copies must be printed with black text on 8 ½ by 11 inch white bond (100% cotton paper), 24 lbs., watermarked, and acid-free paper (e.g., Southworth or Strathmore both produce excellent papers of this quality and are readily available at office supply stores or online, although any paper that meets these requirements may be used). These shall be delivered to the library representative by April 15.
5. Payment for the binding of the two library copies (one in stacks and one in archives) is included in the fee assessed upon initial registration for the Thesis course. See the Schedule of Fees for the year in which the student defends the Thesis. While two copies must be submitted to the library, additional copies of the Thesis may be submitted for binding at an additional fee. Consult with Nicholson Library to determine the fees for personal copies of the thesis. After binding, these will be returned to the student. For personal, bound copies, any type of white 8 ½ by 11 inch paper may be used, and the text may be single- or double-sided.
6. For those who choose to register officially with the copyright office, consult with Nicholson Library to determine the current fee. Payment is to be submitted to the library with the two original copies, along with the UMI Form, with a money order or certified check made payable to: PQIL (ProQuest Information and Learning). It is strongly recommended that the student copyright the thesis to protect it from unauthorized use.



MASTER THESIS TITLE PAGE SAMPLE  
1 ½-inch left margin; 1-inch margin on the 3 remaining sides

ANDERSON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

THESIS TITLE

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE  
FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE  
MASTER OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

BY  
STUDENT'S NAME

ANDERSON, INDIANA  
(DATE OF SUBMISSION)  
MASTER THESIS SIGNATURE PAGE  
1 ½-inch left margin; 1-inch margin on 3 remaining sides

SAMPLE THESIS SIGNATURE PAGE

This Thesis has been approved by Thesis Committee appointed for  
Student's name \_\_\_\_\_, Anderson University School of Theology  
Master of Theological Studies.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Emmanuel Hirsch (Chairperson)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Martin Buber (Committee Member)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Martin Heidegger (Committee Member)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date approved

SAMPLE COPYRIGHT PAGE

©20XX Author's name exactly as it appears on the Thesis Title Page