

M.A. Religion Thesis Overview

Expectations

All candidates for the Masters of Arts in Religion are required to complete and defend a thesis before they will be eligible to graduate. The Master's thesis is a final, book-length paper that is based on the results of original and existing research and substantiates a question, concept, or hypothesis. Students are expected to utilize research methods and sources to develop an original argument that both prepares the student for future work in a Ph.D. program, as well as representing a scholarly sample of writing that displays the students' capabilities and knowledge in a specific field of study.

General Requirements

All master's theses must conform to the format requirements as stipulated by Seaver College and Pepperdine University in the [Graduate Student Thesis Guidelines Packet](#). The Religion Division requires the format for supporting materials (such as footnotes, quotations, endnotes, and bibliographic references for theses) that is written in OT or NT to use the [SBL Handbook of Style](#) (Hendrickson, 1999). Theses written in other areas may use either the SBL Handbook or the [Chicago Manual of Style](#). For all other requirements pertaining to theses format (font, margins, spacing, headings, and page numbering), paper requirements and submission deadlines, students should reference the [Graduate Student Thesis Guidelines Packet](#) available through the Seaver Graduate Programs website.

Course and Enrollment Requirements

It is required that MA students enroll in a total of 6 units of thesis coursework, designated as REL 690 (1-6 units). An IP (In Progress) grade will be given in the course until the thesis is completed. Students must contact the Religion Division Office to enroll in REL 690. Students must maintain continuous enrollment while writing their thesis. Students will continue to enroll in REL 690 until they have reached the threshold of 6 units, at which time if their thesis is still incomplete, they will be required to enroll in GRRE 699 at 0 units to maintain their enrollment status.

Approval Procedures

MA students will notify the Religion Division Office of their intention to begin working on their thesis no later than November 1st for the Spring semester defense. Any students wishing to complete and defend a thesis during the Fall or Summer terms must first get the approval of the Religion Division Chairperson. MA students will nominate a full-time faculty member to serve as their thesis committee advisor and chairperson. The student will then submit a thesis proposal to their committee members for approval the semester prior to their defense, no later than Dec. 1st or the agreed upon deadline established by their committee. Thesis proposals must follow the guidelines established by the Religion Division, along with any other restrictions set forth by an individual student's MA thesis committee. Students should reference the [Religion Division MA Thesis Proposal Guidelines](#) for more details.

No student should undertake a thesis without having their thesis proposal approved by their entire thesis committee. If a student's thesis proposal is rejected, the thesis committee will meet to determine whether or not the student shall be eligible to resubmit their proposal and be allowed to continue in the thesis process.

Proposal to Defense

Once a student's thesis proposal has been approved, the student may begin writing their thesis. It is the student's responsibility to maintain communication with their committee and uphold any deadlines set forth by their committee during the writing process. Students must adhere to the deadlines on the Graduate Programs Thesis Calendar established by the Seaver Graduate Programs Office relating to the filing and defense of their final thesis. Failure to comply with the Seaver Graduate Program's deadlines will automatically result in the postponement of their thesis to the following semester.

At the discretion of the thesis committee, students may be required to hire an outside proof-reader to assist them with the final copy of their thesis. MA candidates are responsible for all expenses related to the thesis preparation, with the exception of binding costs. Pepperdine will cover the cost of binding four (4) copies of the MA thesis; students may purchase additional copies if they desire.

Students will notify the Religion Division Office Manager when they have filed final copies of their thesis with their committee and will at that time, tentatively schedule the time and date of their oral defense. Students should discuss in advance with their committee members the dates and times they plan to turn in their final thesis for reading and when they will complete the oral defense. The thesis and oral defense must receive unanimous vote of the committee in order to be approved. If a student fails to successfully defend their thesis, their thesis committee members will meet with the Religion Division Chairperson to discuss whether the student shall be allowed to continue with their thesis.

From Successful Defense to Binding

After a thesis has successfully been defended, students may need to complete revisions at the instructions of their thesis committee. Students will need to complete the revisions and resubmit their final thesis to their committee for approval before the thesis will be sent to the Religion Division Chairperson for review. After the thesis has been reviewed, the thesis will then be sent to the Seaver Dean's Office to be read by the Seaver Dean and the Graduate Programs proof-reader. At any point during the review of the final thesis by the Religion Division Chairperson, the Graduate Programs Office and the Seaver Dean, the MA student should be prepared to make any recommended revisions. After the thesis has been approved by the Dean's Office, the thesis will be sent to the bindery, where it may take up to 12 weeks to be completed.