

M.A. Religion Thesis Overview

Expectations

A candidate for the Master of Arts in Religion must successfully complete and defend a thesis in order to be eligible to graduate. The Master's thesis is a culminating, detailed investigation that presents the results of original research or a reexamination of previous research, incorporating accepted critical methods appropriate to the development of a clearly defined, consistent line of argument regarding the selected topic. Such an investigation should display the student's knowledge and capabilities in a specific field of study and, if desired, preparedness for more advanced training in a doctoral program.

General Requirements

A successful master's thesis must conform to the formatting requirements stipulated by Seaver College and Pepperdine University in the "Seaver College Thesis Guidelines: M.A. in Religion". The Religion Division & Philosophy Division requires that supporting materials (such as footnotes/endnotes, quotations, and bibliographic references) for a thesis investigating a topic from the Old Testament or New Testament follow the formatting guidelines described in the *SBL Handbook of Style* (Hendrickson, 1999). A thesis investigating any other area may use either the *SBL Handbook of Style* or *The Chicago Manual of Style*. For all other requirements pertaining to the format of the thesis (font, margins, spacing, headings, and page numbering), as well as paper requirements and submission deadlines, the student should consult the "Seaver College Thesis Guidelines: M.A. in Religion" available at the Seaver Graduate Programs website.

Course and Enrollment Requirements

The M.A. student must enroll in a total of 6 units of thesis coursework, designated as REL 690 Thesis (1-6 units). The student must maintain continuous enrollment while writing the thesis, continuing to enroll in REL 690 until reaching the threshold of 6 units. A student who requires additional time for the thesis after completing 6 units of REL 690 must enroll each subsequent semester in GRRE 699 at 0 units. A grade of "IP" (In Progress) will be assigned each semester until the thesis is completed. The student should contact the Religion Division Office each semester to enroll in REL 690 or GRRE 690.

Approval Procedures

The M.A. student may begin the process of conducting research for a thesis anytime after admission into the degree program. At the earliest stages in the process the student should consult with faculty members who might serve on the student's thesis committee, looking for one in particular who will serve as the student's primary advisor / thesis committee chairperson. If necessary, the student will consult with the Religion & Philosophy Divisional Dean in selecting the members of the thesis committee. Once the student has selected a primary advisor and identified the members of the thesis committee, the student will draw up and submit a thesis proposal to the committee members for approval.

The student should submit the thesis proposal to the thesis committee no later than December 1, in anticipation of completion and defense of the thesis during the subsequent Spring term. The thesis proposal must follow the guidelines stipulated in the "Religion Division M.A. Thesis Proposal Guidelines," along with any special instructions or timetable deemed appropriate

by the thesis committee. As soon as the thesis committee has approved the proposal, the student will notify the Rel. & Phil. Division Office of the intent to complete the thesis. Any student who intends to complete and defend a thesis at a time other than the Spring term must receive prior consent from the entire thesis committee and the Divisional Dean.

Proposal to Defense

It is the student's responsibility to maintain communication with the thesis committee and honor the timetable established by the committee during the writing process. The student should be aware, however, that the Seaver Dean's Office determines the deadlines for the submission of final copies and the oral defense of all theses in each semester, and the Rel. & Phil. Division has no authority to deviate from those deadlines. The student should consult the Seaver College Catalog or the Seaver Graduate Programs' website at <http://seaver.pepperdine.edu/graduateprograms/policies-guidelines/> to find the current deadlines. Failure to comply with the Seaver Graduate Programs' deadlines will automatically result in the postponement of the thesis to the following semester.

The student should discuss with the thesis committee the dates and times for submitting the final copy of the thesis for reading by the committee members and the subsequent oral defense. The student will notify the Rel. & Phil. Division Office Manager when the final copy has been presented to the thesis committee, and the Office Manager will at that time consult with the student and the chair of the thesis committee to schedule the time and date of the oral defense of the thesis. The written thesis and oral defense must receive the unanimous vote of the committee in order to be approved. If a student fails to defend the thesis successfully, the thesis committee members will meet with the Rel. & Phil. Divisional Dean to discuss whether to allow the student to continue with the thesis. The thesis committee, if it so chooses, may recommend that the student hire an outside proofreader to assist with the preparation of the final copy of the thesis; however, the student is responsible for all expenses related to the thesis preparation.

From Successful Defense to Submission

At the time the student successfully defends the thesis, the thesis committee might instruct the student to make additional revisions to the thesis. The student must complete the revisions and resubmit the final thesis to the thesis committee for approval before the thesis will be sent to the Divisional Dean for review. Following a favorable review the student is responsible for submitting the following required items to the Seaver Dean's Office.

- (1) Signed Routing Sheet
- (2) Thesis digital archive submission release form
- (3) PDF copy of your thesis emailed to SeaverSAP@pepperdine.edu
- (4) Hard copy of your thesis.

At any point during the review of the final thesis by the Religion Division Chairperson, the Graduate Programs Office and the Seaver Dean, the student should be prepared to make any recommended revisions. Students will be expected to make all required revisions and resubmit a corrected electronic copy to the Seaver Dean's office.

After the Seaver Dean has approved the thesis, it will be sent to the library for electronic storage per the student's selections on the thesis submission release form.