
Guidelines for Writing a Thesis at Moravian Theological Seminary

Beginning the Process of Writing a Thesis

Students should begin planning for their thesis as early as possible in their course of study at MTS:

- MATS students should consult with the Director of MATS Studies in their first semester and plan a course of study that will contribute to their area(s) of research interest.
- MAPC and MDiv students are not required to write a thesis. MAPC or MDiv students who wish to use elective hours for writing a thesis should consult with their academic advisor in their first semester in order to plan a course of study that will contribute to their area(s) of research interest.
- Before registering for thesis credits (SEGS 816 MAPC Thesis, SEGS 826 MATS Thesis, SEGS 846 MDiv Thesis), students must follow the “Developing a Thesis Proposal” guidelines (below), complete the “Approval Process for Writing a Thesis” (below, p. 2), and have a completed Thesis Application form turned in to the Registrar.

Developing a Thesis Proposal

Writing a thesis requires advanced research capabilities. The more advanced research requirements call for the following preparation before writing a proposal:

- If a thesis entails research with human subjects, the student must take the Research Design and Methodology course (SEPF 909) before writing the proposal.
- If a thesis does not entail research with human subjects, the student must satisfactorily complete a tutorial in advanced research with the Seminary Liaison at Reeves Library before writing the proposal.

After meeting the requirements above, a student meets with his or her academic advisor or the Director of MATS Studies to

- describe a topic and thesis
- discuss possible faculty member(s) to serve as advisor and/or reader
- discuss possible adjunct or outside reader(s) (consulting a list of approved adjuncts and readers).
 - The final determination of advisors and readers depends on the agreement of those asked.
 - Typically an advisor would be a full time faculty member.
 - A reader could be another full time faculty member, an adjunct faculty member, or someone approved as a reader.
 - A request to the faculty for a reader who has not been approved should be accompanied by the person’s c.v.

After meeting with the appropriate advisor or Director, the student consults with the thesis advisor and reader to begin to develop a proposal. Under the guidance of the thesis advisor, reader, and the Seminary Liaison at Reeves Library, the student develops a draft of the proposal that includes:

1. Suggested title for the thesis
2. An introduction (up to 3 double-spaced pages) that includes
 - a thesis statement that describes the topic in one or two sentences
 - a “statement of the problem” that condenses the proposed argument into one or two paragraphs, and
 - a brief analysis of the significance of the thesis within the proposed field of study
3. A description of the proposed research methodology/ies (up to 2 double-spaced pages) that
 - delineates the types of research and/or critical methodologies the will be used (reading, interviews, case studies, etc.),
 - describes the contribution of each type of research to the thesis,
 - describes plans for implementing the methodology/ies (e.g. for interviews, how information will be obtained, where and/or from whom it will be obtained, how interviews will be structured, a draft of questionnaires, etc.)
 - (In a thesis that does not involve human subject research, this section might be only a paragraph)
4. A tentative chapter outline (up to 3 double-space pages) that includes
 - chapter titles

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- a brief summary of the intended content or area of study for each chapter and its contribution to the thesis
5. A preliminary bibliography (up to 2 pages) that identifies the most important books, articles, and other resources for the thesis research
 - The bibliography should indicate that there are sufficient resources to support your research and thesis.
 - The bibliography should be formatted according to one of the approved formats in *The Bedford Handbook*, as agreed upon with the advisor.
 6. The thesis proposal, including bibliography, should follow the relevant guidelines for form and content below (pp. 2-3) and should not exceed 10 double-spaced pages.
 7. The student and thesis advisor (and reader where appropriate) work together until the proposal has attained sufficient clarity and thoroughness to be considered for approval.

Approval Process for Thesis Proposals

1. After the proposal is ready for consideration, the thesis advisor will contact the Director of the MATS program. The Director will appoint an ad hoc committee to review the proposal. The committee will be comprised of the thesis advisor, thesis reader, and, on a rotating basis determined by the Director, another member of the full time faculty. Once the committee has been appointed, the thesis proposal will be posted on Blackboard and be accessible to any faculty member. (Not for approval but for information.)
2. Except under exceptional circumstances, proposals will be considered before November 15 in the Fall semester or April 15 in the Spring semester.
3. The student meets with the committee for discussion of the proposal. After discussion, the student will be excused and the committee will discuss further and take an official vote (1) to approve the proposal (with or without required revisions) or (2) to require revision and re-submission of the proposal.
4. Once a proposal is approved, the completed Thesis Application Form will be submitted to the Director of the MATS program, with a copy to the student and the Registrar.
5. Approved thesis applications will be reported to the faculty by the Registrar.

Responsibilities during the Writing of the Thesis

The student will

- write and submit chapters to the advisor and reader according to a schedule developed with the thesis advisor
- make revisions in accord with the critiques of the advisor and reader
- maintain contact with the thesis advisor and reader regarding progress or difficulties
- turn in a near-final copy of thesis by the Oct. or Feb. deadline and an examination copy by the Nov. or March deadline.

The thesis advisor will

- work with the student to develop a writing schedule that accords with thesis deadlines (see below)
- offer guidance in research methodology and appropriate resources
- critique, in writing, the content and form of each chapter as it is submitted (returned within two weeks of receipt)
- supervise the meeting of thesis deadlines.

The thesis reader will

- offer guidance in research methodology and appropriate resources
- critique, in writing, the content and form of each chapter as it is submitted (returned within two weeks of receipt)

If major disagreements arise between advisor and reader over thesis content, they should resolve them among themselves.

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Form and Style

Students should follow the guidelines for citation of sources described in the current style manual of the Seminary (check with your advisor for title and author). Even in draft versions of chapters, students must acknowledge all sources. Any writing submitted for review that does not properly acknowledge sources is subject to a charge of plagiarism.

It is expected that the thesis will conform to the guidelines for use of inclusive language (see the Student Handbook).

The text of the thesis should fall between 40 – 60 pages, with the following guidelines in effect:

Text should be double-spaced. Bibliography and footnotes or endnotes should be single-spaced, with a double-space between.

A standard font should be used (e.g., Times New Roman, 12 point; Arial, 10 point; or an equivalent-sized, standard font). One should avoid the use of script or other decorative fonts.

Margins are to be as follows:

Left Margin	2 inches
Right Margin	1 inch
Top Margin	1.5 inches
Bottom Margin	1.5 inches

Pagination should appear in the upper right corner.

Text should be “left justified” only. Text should not be presented with “full justified” margins.

Hyphenation is permitted.

Either footnotes or end notes are permitted.

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Thesis Exam

Once the thesis advisor and reader agree that the thesis is ready for examination and defense, the advisor will contact the Dean's Office to schedule a thesis exam. The date, time, and location of the exam will be publicly announced in advance.

By March 15 (for May completion) or November 1 (for December completion) the student will submit "examination copies" of the thesis—one for the advisor, one for the reader, and one for the Dean's Office to be available for review by other faculty. These may be photocopies and should be placed in a temporary binder for protection and for ease of handling and reading.

The exam will be conducted by the thesis advisor and reader. With the permission of the thesis advisor, others may be invited from the Seminary community (faculty, staff, or students) to be present for the exam as auditors.

The student will present a brief summary of content, reasons for undertaking the study, research methodologies used, insights and knowledge gained, contributions of the thesis to the field, possible future development of the subject, and so on. The thesis advisor and reader follow this summary with questions and elicit dialogue with the student, seeking clarification, further insights, and/or responses to critiques.

At the end of the exam period, the thesis advisor and reader will adjourn to determine a grade that reflects the quality of the thesis and the responses during the thesis exam. A minimum grade of B- will be required for passing. If the grade is below B-, the student will be given a one-year extension to rework the thesis. During this year, one-half of the normal tuition charge for a six-hour course will be required.

The thesis advisor and reader will return to inform the student of the grade and any corrections, revisions, and additions necessary for final approval of the thesis. The thesis advisor will provide written documentation of any necessary changes within 48 hours of the end of the thesis exam.

Once all necessary changes have been made and final versions of the thesis have been submitted to the advisor and approved, the advisor will submit vouchers for honoraria and travel expenses for the advisor and reader.

Library Copies and Recording of the Grade

Following the approval of the final version of the thesis, two copies of the final version of the thesis, reflecting necessary additions or corrections are to be prepared for the library. These copies shall be printed or copied on 100% acid-free paper and submitted in manila envelopes to the advisor by 9:00 am on May 1 of the year of graduation (or, if May 1 falls on a Saturday or Sunday, by 9:00 on the Monday immediately following May 1).

Upon acceptance of the two library copies, the advisor will notify the Registrar of the grade to be recorded on the student's transcript. The advisor will deliver the library copies to the Dean's Office to be forwarded to Reeves Library.

One library copy will be bound for use in Reeves Library. It will be fully catalogued, placed on open stacks in the Groenfeldt Collection, and limited to building use only.

One library copy will be sent to Preservation Resources for microfilming. Preservation Resources will produce an archival copy for the Seminary to be stored in a location outside of Reeves library. One microfilm copy will be produced for Reeves Library. Microfilm copies will be kept in the Library's microforms area and can circulate on interlibrary loan.

If a student wishes to have the thesis bound, a 100% acid free copy may be submitted to the Technical Services Librarian, who will have it bound for a nominal fee.

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Summary of Deadlines and Responsibilities

Action	Person(s) Responsible	Deadline
Proposal Process		
Satisfactorily complete requirements for advanced research	Student	Before beginning to write proposal
Follow guidelines for developing a proposal for faculty approval	Student, thesis advisor	November 1 or April 1
Faculty vote on thesis proposal	Full time faculty	Soon after submission of proposal
Notify student, thesis advisor, and thesis reader of faculty action	Faculty secretary	Immediately following faculty action
Writing the Thesis		
Drafts of chapters for review, working toward completion of near-final copy of thesis by the October 1 or February 15 deadline.	Student	As scheduled with thesis advisor, but no later than October 1 for December completion or February 15 of graduation year
Examination copies given to thesis advisor, thesis reader, Dean's Office	Student	As scheduled with thesis advisor, but no later than Nov. 1 for December completion or March 15 of graduation year
Thesis Exam		
Set date, time, location for exam with Dean's Office; invite auditors	Thesis advisor	As soon as possible after examination version is approved
Arrange room, explain procedures, conduct exam	Thesis advisor	Day of exam
Provide student with written summary of necessary changes	Thesis advisor	Within 48 hours of exam
Library Copies/Recording of Grades		
Prepare and submit two 100% acid free library copies to thesis advisor	Student	9:00 am on May 1 (or, if May 1 falls on Saturday or Sunday, 9:00 on the Monday immediately after May 1)
Notify Registrar of thesis grade, deliver library copies to Dean's Office, submit vouchers for thesis advisor and reader	Thesis advisor	Upon acceptance of library copies
Submit library copies to Library	Dean's Office	Upon receipt