



Master of Theological Studies

Guide for Thesis Writers, Directors, and Readers

Revised Summer of 2024

Thank you for your willingness to be an MTS thesis writer, director, or reader. In the following pages you will find:

- A description of your role as a director or reader
- Guidelines for the thesis discussion
- Master of Theological Studies thesis procedures
- Library guidelines
- Sample thesis title page
- MTS thesis rubric

These documents will be useful to you as you fulfill your responsibilities as a writer, director, or reader.

In case of any questions or concerns, please contact one of the following:

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Thesis Director

It is the responsibility for the student to make initial contact with the director. The thesis director will be sent a copy of the student's thesis proposal, the approval letter from the thesis review committee and other pertinent reviews.

The thesis director should regularly meet with the student during his/her research and writing process. (This may include setting weekly or monthly goals for the student or it could be setting deadlines for each section of the thesis.) There is not a set number of meetings the student and the thesis director must have, though regular contact is essential to keeping the student and the thesis project on track.

A thesis director needs to provide positive and constructive comments, especially early in the writing process. At the first meeting, it is best to focus on the merits of the project and your own enthusiasm for the thesis topic. Students often approach writing their thesis with a great deal of anxiety, and half the battle is getting them to start writing. If you believe the topic needs to be narrowed or reconfigured (or if you have any other reservations about the argument a student is constructing) suggest these revisions after the initial research and drafting have begun. In many cases, the student will see the need for these revisions as s/he begins to write.

It is the responsibility of the student to follow the directives in the thesis guidelines given to them in the Integrative Colloquium and for following the writing style requirements. Thesis directors are responsible for checking that the student's work is following the proper style format. Students in the MTS program must use Chicago Style. Guidelines on formatting the thesis document should be addressed periodically during the research process (e.g. abstract guidelines or page numbering guidelines). Thesis guidelines can be found at the end of this document.

The thesis director must approve the thesis before it is distributed to the thesis readers. The student will distribute via email the thesis to the readers and, in conjunction with the director, suggest several dates and times for the thesis discussion. When choosing dates for the discussion, please give the readers at least three weeks to read the thesis. Shannon and Kathleen (in De Pere) or Christina (in NM) should also be included in the email. When the date and time for the discussion is determined, contact Shannon (De Pere) or Christina (NM) who will reserve a room for the discussion.

Thesis Readers

Thesis readers will be asked to read over the student's project after the student has already worked closely with a thesis director. By the time the project reaches the readers, typically there are no major changes needed. If the reader has major concerns, these concerns should be directed to the thesis director before the discussion, not to the student. It is the director's responsibility to address the concern, if appropriate, with the student. Once again, this should occur at least one week before the discussion to give the student time to make the necessary revision before the discussion.

When the thesis is emailed to the readers, the student suggests dates and times for the thesis discussion. Guidelines for the discussion can be found in this document. The discussion will be led by the thesis director.

Thesis Discussion Guidelines

Generally, the thesis director facilitates the discussion. The student must bring a hard copy of the thesis title page to the discussion. The discussion can be relatively informal. The general format is as follows:

Before the student enters the room, the director and readers meet briefly to discuss their general impressions of the student's work, to determine the order of questioning and to voice any concerns.

Upon entering the room, the director invites the student to give a short (3 to 5 minutes) summary of work (i.e., motivation for doing the thesis, major thesis, surprises along the way of doing research). This is followed by a discussion in which the director and readers can initially focus on statements that need clarifying and then proceed to more substantive questions. If the thesis is exceptional, the conversation ends up being a critical and appreciative assessment by the readers and director. At times (not always), the discussion can continue by making specific comments regarding phrasing/grammatical corrections. These can be done on the readers' copies of the paper itself and given to the student to correct later.

At the end of the discussion, the student is asked to leave the room and the director and readers discuss their conclusions. At this time they also individually complete the MTS Thesis Rubric (included in this document). They are each responsible for mailing or emailing a signed copy of the rubric to Shannon in De Pere.

The options are:

- A) Pass as is (no changes necessary). This is rare since there usually are a few spelling/grammatical corrections.
- B) Pass with minor (e.g., phrasing/grammar/spelling) changes and recommendations suggested but not necessary.
- C) Pass with some significant revisions necessary. If this is the case, the director needs to talk with the readers to see if they want to see the revisions or if they defer to the director's judgment. If they defer, they can sign off immediately. If not, they will sign off after they see the revisions.
- D) Fail/Start Over. This has never happened, nor should it, since such a thesis should never have reached this stage in the process.

The thesis director will keep the title page, whether or not the readers sign it. After the final thesis is submitted to the director and readers, if requested, and they approve the thesis, the director will sign the title page. The thesis director will obtain the signatures of the readers if they did not sign the title page previously.

The title page, when signed by all three committee members, will be turned in to Shannon along with an electronic version of the final approved thesis sent by the student.

Then Kathleen will register the student's grade for the thesis after it is submitted to Shannon; then stipend paperwork will be processed. Shannon will post the thesis on the SNC Digital Commons.

Master of Theological Studies Thesis Procedures

The process outlined below is meant to help students keep on track in writing their thesis. These guidelines are especially important to follow if the student wishes to complete his/her thesis in two semesters.

1. After the Completion of the Integrative Colloquium

- After receiving feedback from the proposal draft submitted, reviewed and graded for the Integrative Colloquium, students must resubmit the revised proposal along with a form containing the names and contact information for the proposed Thesis Director and two Readers to Christina or Kathleen. The purpose and rationale of the thesis should be clearly explained. The resources students will use should be listed as an aid to determining the feasibility of the thesis. Resources to be listed include a partial bibliography. All thesis proposals are reviewed by faculty who approve, approve with reservations, or do not approve the draft. If a thesis proposal is not approved, it must be revised and resubmitted for the same faculty review process. Once a proposal is faculty-approved, it is reviewed by the MTS Director and the SNC Review Committee who make the final decision regarding acceptance.
- Kathleen sends a letter to the student, copied to the Thesis Director, no later than three weeks after the reception of the thesis proposal at Saint Norbert College with the SNC Review Committee's decision regarding the approval of the proposal. Kathleen or Christina also sends all relevant documents (this booklet, the thesis proposal, the review forms completed by faculty members, etc) to the student and to the Thesis Director. This booklet and the approved thesis proposal are sent to the two readers. Kathleen sends letters to the Thesis Director and Readers thanking them for their involvement and indicating the recompense they can expect.

2. Semester 1

- Please register for THEO 512, Master's Thesis Project I, regardless of commencement participation.
- It is important to meet with your Thesis Director on a regular basis in order to complete your thesis in a timely manner. It is the responsibility of the student to initially contact the Thesis Director. The first meeting (face to face, phone call or email exchange) with your Director should be to discuss the approval letter and the suggestions made by the Thesis Reviewers.

3. Semester 2

- Please register for THEO 513 Master's Thesis Project II, for the second semester of thesis writing (regardless of commencement participation).

Note well: If the student intends to participate in this year's commencement, the following time frames must be observed.

4. No Later Than 3 Months before the End of the Semester

- It is suggested that the first draft should be in the hands of the Thesis Director no later than 3 months before the end of the semester. Drafts should not have grammatical and spelling errors. Drafts also include a title page, abstract, working bibliography and any appendices. It is the responsibility of the student to follow the proper writing style (including the proper format for the working bibliography) and thesis guidelines. The Thesis Director will review the style and guidelines.

5. No Later Than 2 Months before the End of the Semester

- Once the Director approves the final draft, the student emails the thesis to the Readers. During this review period the Readers should not be in direct contact with the student but express any concerns to the Thesis Director. The Director will relay information to the student. The rationale is to keep the Director informed but also to lessen the chance of confusion for the student.

- At the time of submitting the thesis to the Readers, the student should include possible dates and times for the thesis discussion in the email. Please give the Readers ample time to critically read the thesis.

6. Thesis Discussion

- The student initiates the scheduling of the discussion by working with the Thesis Director and Thesis Readers to find a common date. The discussion can be held at the Abbey (for NM students), at the SNC campus, or, if necessary, by Zoom.
- A hard copy of the thesis title page should be brought to the discussion. The Director and Readers will either 1) approve the thesis as is, 2) approve with minor changes, 3) approve with significant revisions needed, or 4) fail the thesis. In the case of revisions, if the Readers are comfortable signing the title page without seeing the revisions, they should do so. The Thesis Director should not sign the title page until all revisions are seen and approved. If the Readers sign the title page at the discussion, the Thesis Director should take the title page after the discussion. Otherwise, the student should take the title page and obtain signatures after approval. After the changes are made to the thesis, the thesis should be emailed to the Thesis Director (and Readers if they wish to see them). Having given the final approval, the Thesis Director signs the title page, and the student sends it to Shannon along with an electronic copy of the final approved thesis.
- The final approved thesis is submitted to the SNC library for electronic archiving.
- Upon completion of the thesis process (including the submission of the completed thesis rubric form), Kathleen initiates the stipend payment for the Thesis Director and Readers.

7. No Later Than 1 Month before the End of the Semester

- In order to participate in this year's commencement, the final approved copy of the thesis must be sent to Shannon at least one month before the celebration.

8. Additional Information

- In Albuquerque the Thesis Director must be an adjunct faculty member at St. Norbert College. Requests for directors other than SNC faculty members, must be approved in writing. The two Readers are not required to be a member of the St. Norbert College adjunct faculty, but they must have their Master's Degree and expertise in a field related to the thesis topic.
- Please see Guidelines for thesis formatting instructions
- The master thesis is typically completed at the end of the second semester during enrollment of THEO 513. Students requiring additional time to complete the thesis project are required to register for THEO 600 each semester thereafter. This is a -0- credit course. However, there is a \$100 fee for each semester. Students submit the registration form indicating course number THEO 600 along with the \$100 fee each semester.
- Reminder: students must complete the MTS degree within 8 summers of starting classes.

Drafted 5/31/2024

Library Guidelines

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide consistent information regarding the format of the thesis submitted to the library. These guidelines may deviate slightly from the guidelines in a particular style manual, however, it is important to comply with these guidelines in the following areas. Questions concerning style should be addressed to the MTS office. All graduate students are encouraged to purchase the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Follow this manual for anything not covered below.

Typeface: Use 12 point type for text and 10 point type for notes. Typeface should be something readable, such as Times New Roman or Palatino.

Margins: Margins should be set at no less than 1" and no greater than 1.5".

Pagination: The entire thesis must be paginated in one consecutive numbering sequence. The title page is considered to be page 1, and every page must be included in the count regardless of whether a number is physically printed on a page. *Do not number or count the abstract page.* It is not a part of the thesis but is inserted behind the title page for convenience after the thesis is compiled.

Example:

Title Page (page 1 but not numbered)

Abstract (no page number)

Table of Contents (page 2)

Text (Page 3)

Copyright: The student should place a copyright notice on the thesis in order to protect the thesis from being copied and distributed (in paper form or electronically) by someone other than St. Norbert College. A copyright notice consists of :

1. the symbol "c" with a circle around it © and/or the word "copyright"
2. year of publication
3. name of the copyright owner
4. words "All rights reserved"

The copyright notice should be placed on the title page.

Example: © 2011 Jane Doe. All rights reserved.

Copyright waiver: When copyright is held by the student, the student must grant royalty-free permission to the College in order to reproduce and publicly distribute the copies of the thesis. This allows the College to interlibrary loan a copy of the thesis to other students, researchers and faculty.

This waiver is only for St. Norbert College, no other party. All other parties must comply with copyright law. The student must place the following statement on the thesis title page: **“The author hereby grants to St. Norbert College permission to reproduce and distribute publicly paper and electronic copies of this thesis document in whole or in part.”**

Title: Your thesis can be a useful reference resource for other students only if it can be easily located. Current retrieval systems use words in a title (and sometimes other descriptive words) to locate works. Be sure to choose a title that is a meaningful description of the content of your thesis.

Title Page: Please see the title page example for proper format.

Abstract: Each thesis must include an abstract not more than 100 words long. The abstract should be a brief descriptive summary of the thesis; it should state the problem being investigated, method of investigation, results obtained and the conclusions reached. The abstract should follow the title page. (Do not number or count the abstract page. It is not a part of the thesis, but is placed after the title page for convenience.)

An excellent discussion of writing an abstract can be found at:

<http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/bizwrite/abstracts.html>

Sample Title Page

TITLE (can be any type or size)

By

First, MI, Last

St. Norbert College

De Pere, WI

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
of

Master of Theological Studies

Approved:

Thesis Director

Reader

Reader

© Year, First, MI, Last. All rights reserved.

The author hereby grants to St. Norbert College permission to reproduce and distribute publicly paper and electronic copies of this thesis document in whole or in part.

MTS Thesis Rubric

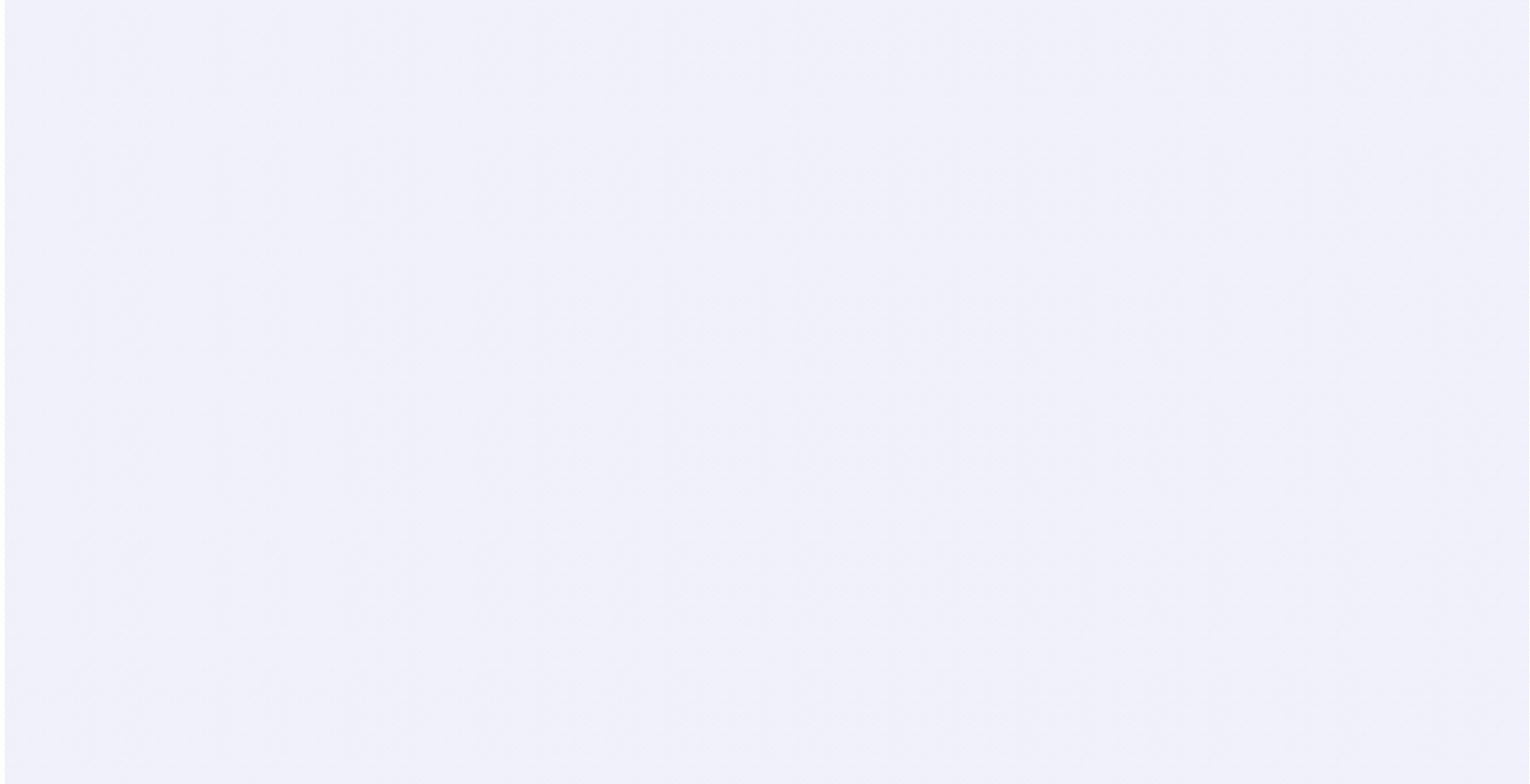
updated 09/16/2021

The purpose of the thesis project is to analyze a significant pastoral issue or concern and to propose a response. Both the analysis and response need to be grounded in a theologically sound approach. This approach must be informed by critical, focused, coherent reflection and must include appropriate resources from scripture, from the Christian tradition, from ecclesial documents, and from contemporary experience and culture.

Student Name and Thesis Title:

Rating	The student clearly formulates & describes a significant theological issue/pastoral concern &/or describes the issue or concern w/in a specific ministerial context.	The student makes use of appropriate textual resources (Scripture, Christian tradition & ecclesial documents) in the analysis of the issue/concern.	The student makes use of appropriate contemporary experience and culture in the analysis of the issue/concern.	The student critically analyzes assumptions and presents coherent analysis.	The student presents argument and thesis/project findings in a professional manner.
Exceeds	Issue is clearly formulated and draws on a variety of perspectives to present a systematic and creative response. Paper recognizes both explicit and theological assumptions and implications. <input type="checkbox"/>	Resources are used noting critical interpretations that open new responses in addressing the issue. <input type="checkbox"/>	Several various disciplinary resources are used to present a multi-level analysis. <input type="checkbox"/>	Critical analysis and assessment of proposal in light of some alternative perspectives and incorporation of critique to proposal. <input type="checkbox"/>	Presentation is coherent, focused, and engaging in a creative manner that conveys clearly the significance of the issue and results of the research. <input type="checkbox"/>
Meets Expectations	Issue is clearly formulated within its pastoral context and identifies the significant theological assumptions included in addressing the topic. <input type="checkbox"/>	Appropriate textual resources are used to analyze the pastoral issue in a way that utilizes key primary resources and a range of secondary resources. <input type="checkbox"/>	Demonstrates awareness of some significant elements that characterize the context in which the issue is situated. <input type="checkbox"/>	Identifies some significant strengths and limitations of presented positions. <input type="checkbox"/>	Presentation is coherent, clear, and conveys the central findings of the paper/project in an accessible manner. <input type="checkbox"/>
Does Not Meet	Issue is formulated, but details of the issue or its pastoral context are not consistent, clear or complete. <input type="checkbox"/>	Pivotal/critical resources are used, but other significant primary or secondary texts are missing. <input type="checkbox"/>	The use of the contemporary experience and culture is made in the analysis of the pastoral issue, but some aspects are not consistent, clear or complete. <input type="checkbox"/>	Analysis of some assumptions and relevance is present, but further development/clarity is needed. <input type="checkbox"/>	Presentation is not focused and is not connected in a manner that makes it easy to grasp. <input type="checkbox"/>

Comments:

A large, empty rectangular area with a light blue gradient, intended for entering comments.

Evaluator's Signature:

A horizontal rectangular area with a light blue gradient, intended for the evaluator's signature.

Date:

A small horizontal rectangular area with a light blue gradient, intended for the date.