

Master of Theology (Research)



Handbook

Welcome!

The Master of Theology degree offered through Forge Theological Seminary prepares students both professionally and personally to serve the church as competent teachers, pastors, and leaders. It results in rigorous research, reflection, critical inquiry, and writing. The faculty and leadership of Forge Theological Seminary welcome you to the journey and trust that the Lord will guide your studies.

1. Admission and Student Status

1.1 Introduction

Forge Theological Seminary offers the degree of Master of Theology (Research) in the following concentrations: New Testament; Old Testament; Theology; Biblical Counseling; Homiletics; and Christian Apologetics.

1.1.1 Doctrinal Stance

All staff and faculty members affirm the following:

- a. The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy
- b. The Nashville Statement
- c. The Danvers Statement
- d. The Statement on Social Justice and the Gospel
- e. The Five *Solas* of the Protestant Reformation
- f. The Apostles', Nicene, Chalcedonian, and Athanasian Creeds

1.2 Purpose and Objectives of the Master of Theology Program

The Master of Theology program is intended primarily to equip students for greater service to Christ's church through graduate level research and writing. Further, this program aims to develop theological formation, biblical reflection, and critical thought through the production of God-honoring and rigorous research.

1.2.1 Phases of the Program

Phase 1: Submission and approval of application and preliminary research proposal.

Phase 2: Appointment of a supervisor and construction of a formal research proposal.

Phase 3: Development of a thesis.

Phase 4: Submission of the thesis and examination by committee.

1.3 Admission

1.3.1 Applicants must demonstrate the following:

- a. An undergraduate degree (preferably in biblical or theological studies or a related field) consisting of at least four years of full-time study and an overall GPA of no less than 3.0.
- b. Longstanding membership in and service to a local church.
- c. Proficiency in biblical Greek (for NT concentration).
- d. Proficiency in biblical Hebrew (for OT concentration).
- e. General agreement with Forge Theological Seminary's doctrinal stance.
- f. Proficiency in English.

1.3.2 Application Materials

Students should provide a completed Preliminary Research Proposal, transcripts of prior education, and three references (see Preliminary Research Proposal).

1.3.3 Denial of Admission

Applicants who are denied admission, and who wish to reapply, must wait at least one year before doing so. All requirements not previously met must be satisfied before admission is possible.

1.3.4 Tuition and Fees

Upon admission into the program, students may pay tuition via <https://www.forge.education>. The tuition for the Master of Theology program is a monthly subscription of \$60 and a one-time graduation fee of \$65.

1.3.5 Refunds

Forge Theological Seminary does not provide refunds for either tuition or graduation fees.

1.3.6 Withdrawal and Termination of Student Status

For reasons sufficient unto himself, any student is free to withdraw from the program. Similarly, if at anytime the faculty, supervisor, or leadership of Forge Theological Seminary determines that the student should not proceed in the program, the student will be withdrawn.

Students who wish to reapply must wait a minimum of one year from the time of their prior enrollment.

2. Research

2.1 Supervised Research and Writing

Under the guidance of a supervisor, each student must complete a research proposal and thesis related to a specific area within his chosen emphasis. His thesis topic must be presented and approved via the research proposal. The student must demonstrate the ability to investigate and present original research in writing that makes a substantial and distinctive contribution to theoretical knowledge.

This research must critically engage with the subject material, address contemporary scholarship, and produce excellence in scholarship.

2.2 Research Proposal

Using the research proposal template, the student will present his research proposal for approval. This proposal will determine the student's final subject area. This proposal should precisely follow the provided template and Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 9th ed. (Chicago, IL: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2018); Patrick Alexander et al. eds., *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Pub., 1999).

2.3 Thesis

The student will produce a thesis of no fewer than 80 pages of primary research, not including cover page, approval page, table of contents, or bibliography.

2.3.1 Thesis Production

Having had his preliminary research proposal and research proposal approved, the student then may begin constructing his thesis. After the completion of the first two

chapters, the student will submit his draft to his supervisor for review. Following approval, the student may submit the following two chapters and so forth until the first draft of the thesis is complete. Finally, the student will develop a final edition of his thesis that will be presented to the examination committee. This final edition will not be reviewed by his supervisor until the examination.

2.4 Pagination

Students will precisely paginate their thesis according the provided template and Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 9th ed. (Chicago, IL: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2018).

2.5 Citation

All Biblical, ancient literature, and related citations will precisely follow Patrick Alexander et al. eds., *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Pub., 1999).

All other citations must be footnoted and follow Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 9th ed. (Chicago, IL: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2018).

2.6 Thesis Grading Rubric

	1 Unsatisfactory	2 Developing	3 Satisfactory	4 Exemplary
1.0 Use of Secondary Sources (Degree Outcome 1)				
1.1 Scope of Research Bibliography	Research bibliography contains few appropriate sources AND the sources do not represent a wide range of critical perspectives.	Research bibliography contains some appropriate sources AND/OR the sources do not represent a wide range of critical perspectives.	Research bibliography contains a sufficient number of appropriate sources which represent a wide range of critical perspectives. Student incorporates some sources in a research language.	Research bibliography contains an extraordinary number of appropriate sources which represent the fullest range of critical perspectives. Student makes substantial use of sources in one or more research languages.
1.3 Relevance	Research bibliography is unfocused and off-topic. AND the student relies primarily on tertiary, non-academic, outdated, or inexpert secondary sources.	Research bibliography is focused and on-topic BUT the student relies too often on tertiary, non-academic, outdated, or inexpert secondary sources.	Research bibliography is focused and on-topic. The student relies mostly on primary and secondary sources that are academic, current, and expert.	Research bibliography is focused and on-topic, with extensive use of primary and secondary sources that are academic, current, and expert.
2.0 Evaluation of Secondary Sources (Degree Outcomes 1, 3)				
2.1 Analysis of Source Material	Student does not examine his sources in appropriate detail and relies mostly on secondary summaries of positions taken therein. His summaries of viewpoints are cursory and often inaccurate.	Student often examines his sources in appropriate detail and often relies on primary sources to arrive at his conclusions, but with some instances of inaccuracy and undue reliance on secondary summaries.	Student examines his sources in appropriate detail and relies mostly on primary sources to arrive at his conclusions. His summaries of viewpoints are adequately detailed and consistently accurate.	Student examines his sources in extraordinary detail and relies consistently on primary sources to arrive at his conclusions. His summaries of viewpoints are adequately detailed and consistently accurate.
2.2 Synthesis of Source Material	Student does not demonstrate the ability to classify positions taken in his source material and to identify their essential characteristics.	Student demonstrates some ability to classify positions taken in his source material and to identify their essential characteristics, with some erroneous or confusing choices in this area.	Student demonstrates the ability to classify positions taken in his source material and to identify their essential characteristics.	Student demonstrates the ability to classify the positions taken in his source material and to identify their essential characteristics, doing so with special insight.
2.3 Evaluation of Source Material	Student does not treat his sources fairly. Sources are described uncharitably and/or illogically, and they are subjected to excessive criticism, while others receive unduly favorable treatment.	Student treats most sources fairly. Sources are usually described with charity and logical rigor. Most are subjected to appropriate criticism. There are, nevertheless, some instances of failure in these areas.	Student treats his sources fairly. Positions taken therein are described with charity and logical rigor, and all sides are subjected to appropriate criticism.	Student treats his sources fairly. Positions taken therein are described with extraordinary charity and logical rigor, and all sides are consistently subjected to appropriate and insightful criticism.
3.0 Hypothesis/Thesis (Degree Outcome 2)				
3.1 Clarity/Resolution	Student does not have a clearly defined thesis.	Student has a thesis that is partially clear.	Student's thesis is clear and well-defined.	
3.2 Viability	The thesis is not provable. It does not lend itself readily to any sort of demonstration.	The thesis is somewhat provable BUT with some aspects that are not available to <i>a priori</i> and/or empirical demonstration.	The thesis lends itself easily to <i>a priori</i> and/or empirical forms of demonstration.	

4.0 Research Design and Implementation (Degree Outcomes 2, 3)				
4.1 Justification of Chosen Method	The student does not effectively defend his methodology, with alternative approaches ignored and/or overlooked.	The student defends his methodology BUT with inadequate attention given to alternative approaches.	The student defends his methodology, giving sufficient attention to alternative approaches.	The student defends his methodology with strong and detailed attention given to likely objections and alternative approaches.
4.2 Consistency of Application	Methods differed substantially from ones adopted in the introductory chapter, and this change invalidated the larger thesis.	Methods differed somewhat from the ones adopted in the introductory chapter, and this change compromised the larger argument.	Methods were the same as the ones adopted in the introductory chapter.	
4.3 Effectiveness of Method	Student's methodology did not produce a sustained argument in support of his thesis. The resulting argument has obvious deficiencies of structure and logic.	Student's methodology produced a partial argument in support of his thesis. There are some gaps in the argument and deficiencies of logic.	Student's methodology produced a sustained argument in support of his thesis. The resulting argument is cogent.	Student's methodology produced a sustained argument in support of his thesis. The resulting argument is uniquely persuasive and creative.
5.0 Logic and Reasoning (Degree Outcomes 1, 2, 3)				
5.1 Precision	The student ignores or overlooks obvious and important distinctions.	The student misses some obvious and important distinctions.	The student makes the obvious and important distinctions.	The student makes both obvious AND subtle distinctions that are important for his essay.
5.2 Moderation	The student overstates the strength of his argument. His claims are extravagant and careless.	The student argues with an overall sense of proportion BUT with some lack of care in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of his argument.	The student expresses the strengths and weaknesses of his argument with appropriate moderation.	
5.3 Cogency	The student does not produce a well-structured argument AND his argument is marred by frequent errors of logic.	The student produces an argument that mostly without errors of structure and/or logic, BUT there remain some difficulties in this area.	The student produces a well-structured argument AND his argument is free of errors in structure and logic.	The student argues his case with extraordinary facility in structure and logic. The argument is always engaging and insightful.
5.4 Eloquence	The student's prose is unclear, wordy, and poorly organized. Reader faces needless difficulty in following the student's argument.	The student's prose is sometimes clear, concise, and well-organized. Student needs to improve on transitional statements, paragraph divisions, and other elements as identified by the thesis Committee.	The student's prose is clear, concise, and well-organized. Student uses appropriate transitional statements and paragraph divisions to create a consistently readable document.	The student's prose is extraordinarily clear, concise, and well-organized. Minimal effort is needed to read the work and follow its arguments. Student writes engagingly, yet academically.
6.0 Form/Appearance (Degree Outcome 3)				

5.1 Grammar	There are numerous errors in spelling and grammar (approximately, more than 4 per page, on average).	There are some errors in spelling and grammar (approximately, less than 4 per page, on average).	There are few errors in spelling and grammar (approximately, one or less per page, on average).	There are very few errors in spelling and grammar (approximately, less than one per page, on average).
5.2 Eloquence	The student's prose is unclear, wordy, and poorly organized. Reader faces needless difficulty in following the student's argument.	The student's prose is sometimes clear, concise, and well-organized. Student needs to improve on transitional statements, paragraph divisions, and other elements as identified by the Essay Committee.	The student's prose is clear, concise, and well-organized. Student uses appropriate transitional statements and paragraph divisions to create a consistently readable document.	The student's prose is extraordinarily clear, concise, and well-organized. Minimal effort is needed to read the work and follow its arguments. Student writes in a creative manner while maintaining an appropriate academic tone.
5.3 MBTS Style Guidelines	Student consistently deviates from the MBTS Style Manual.		Student consistently conforms to the MBTS Style Manual. Any deviations are approved by Committee chair.	
7.0 Contribution to Field of Study (Degree Outcome 1)				
7.1 Relevance to Field of Study	The thesis falls outside the scope of student's chosen field of expertise.		The thesis falls inside the scope of student's chosen field of expertise.	
7.2 Significance of Results	The thesis' results do not address an important question in his chosen field of study.		The thesis' results address an important and unresolved question or deficiency in his chosen field of study.	
7.3 Uniqueness of the Research	The thesis' methods, arguments, and/or results are not at all unique. The candidate has merely done what others have done.	The thesis' methods, arguments, and/or results are partially unique. To a certain extent, the candidate has merely done what others have done.	The thesis' methods, arguments, and/or results are sufficiently unique to be informative within the field.	The thesis' methods, arguments, and/or results are obviously unique and highly informative within the field.

3. Examination Procedures

3.1 Presentation Preparation

The preparation for examination should consist of the following:

a) **Presentation:** The production of a video made available to the committee which presents:

- A summary of the student's educational and vocational background as well as a

summary of his theological commitments and involvement in a local church.

- General summary and presentation of his thesis.
- A summary and explanation of the purpose, meaning, and importance of each chapter of the thesis.
- An explanation of what research, preparation, and study the student achieved through the production of thesis.

b) **Documents:** Accompanying the aforementioned presentation, the following documents should be presented for examination:

- A full *curriculum vitae* detailing all work history, publications, and educational history handed in PDF format to the supervisor.
- A copy of the final thesis handed in via email in Word document (e.g., .doc, .docx) format to the supervisor.
- A detailed confession of faith (10,000 words or less) with footnoted biblical references produced by the student which covers the following headings: The Word of God; the Triune God; the Father; the Son; the Holy Spirit; the creation; the gospel; the church; the sacraments; the consummation of redemption; the final judgment. This confession should leave no question among the committee as to what the student believes pertaining to these headings. This document should precisely follow SBL guidelines for biblical citations. Submit this document in PDF format.

3.2 Examination

The student should announce to his supervisor that he has adequately prepared the aforementioned presentation and documentation. This material should be sent to the supervisor in an email. The video should comprise a readily viewable link, and the

documents should be in the required formats. Following this:

- c) The student's supervisor will convene an examination of the presentation and documents with a minimum of two degreed readers.
- d) Graduate readers possess either a doctoral degree in a relevant field or a terminal graduate degree with significant research. Together with the supervisor, these men comprise the committee.
- e) A period of time, determined by the committee but not exceeding three calendar months, will be afforded for examination.
- f) At the close of the examination period, the committee will privately issue recommendations.
- g) Successful candidates will receive notification from their supervisor or a Seminary official as to the outcome of their examination. The student may then discontinue his tuition subscription and pay his graduation fee.
- h) A student who fails to pass his examination will receive either a feedback report which outlines the required changes and(or) corrections or the student will be removed from the program. In the case of a feedback report, the supervisor may permit one consultation with the student to address the required changes. After a period of no longer than three months, a single re-submission is permitted. If the student does not pass examination on his second attempt, he will be removed from the Master of Theology program.

In the case of removal without a feedback report, some form of academic malpractice (e.g., plagiarism) and(or) discovery of a significant moral failing evidenced in the examination (e.g., deceit in the submitted documents, presentation) and(or) theological heterodoxy must be involved. In such a case, the student will not be permitted to reapply to any program offered by Forge Theological Seminary.

4. Award

The degree of Master of Theology in the appropriate concentration will be awarded by mail following payment of the graduation fee.

Assessment Grades

Assignment	Weight
Thesis	700
Examination	300
Total	1000

Grading Scale:

930+	A	93-100%
900-929	A-	90-92%
870-899	B+	87-89%
830-869	B	83-86%
800-829	B-	80-82%
770-799	C+	77-79%
730-769	C	73-76%
700-729	C-	70-72%
670-699	D+	67-69%
630-669	D	63-66%
600-629	D-	60-62%
0-599	F	0-59%