

## The M.Div. Thesis

1. A thesis is an academic research essay which affirms and demonstrates a proposition about a particular topic, using authoritative evidence and reasonable argument. It is written under faculty supervision.
2. The M.Div. thesis should be about forty pages (10,000 words) in length, plus bibliography.
3. The thesis should have the following characteristics.
  - A. The topic should be defined with sufficient narrowness that the student can master the relevant primary and secondary source material in a reasonable amount of time. (Since the M.Div. thesis is weighted as two TST credits, it represents approximately 200 hours of work.)
  - B. The proposition to be proved (the “thesis statement”) should be stated clearly at an early point in the thesis. The thesis statement is typically one sentence in length.
  - C. The thesis should identify the primary source material that is authoritative for the demonstration of the thesis statement. For the M.Div. thesis, it is acceptable for the student to use English translations of source material originally written in a foreign language. The thesis should indicate any particular problems in identifying or using the primary source material, such as questions about authorship, textual transmission, edition, or translation.
  - D. The thesis should indicate the method or methods which the thesis will use to interpret and make use of the primary source material.
  - E. The thesis should indicate the *status quaestionis*, that is, the current state of scholarly enquiry concerning the topic, including areas of general agreement and areas of specific disagreement.
  - F. The thesis should be clearly organized. All parts of the thesis should contribute directly or indirectly to demonstrating, clarifying, illustrating, or contextualizing the thesis statement. The demonstration of the thesis should proceed coherently. There should be

an introduction, an exposition, and a conclusion. Chapter divisions are optional.

G. Arguments for the thesis statement should be reasonable and persuasive. The writing should be clear. In principle, every statement of substance needs to be supported by a sound argument based on authoritative evidence. Rhetorical devices designed to impress, bully, or shame the reader into agreement should be avoided.

H. Technical apparatus such as footnotes and bibliography should conform to proper usage for scholarly reporting in the humanities. The *Chicago Manual of Style* is a standard guide. Grammar, spelling, and punctuation should be as flawless as possible.

4. The thesis should be presented in the following format. The paper should be standard 8½"×11" paper of at least 20-pound weight, and preferably 24-pound weight, printed double-spaced on one side of each page. The font should be 12-point in size. The printing should be clean and entirely legible. Margins should be 1 inch or a little more per side. Pages should be numbered. References should be footnoted. A title page should be supplied.

5. The following is the standard process at Wycliffe College for developing and writing the thesis.

A. The student should decide on a general topic.

B. The student should identify a faculty member with whom he or she would like to work on this topic, and may invite the faculty member to serve as the thesis supervisor.

In most cases the supervisor will be a member of the Wycliffe faculty. The student may invite a faculty members from another TST college to supervise the thesis, but in this case the student is asked to discuss the matter first with his or her Wycliffe faculty adviser. If there are weighty reasons for asking a person outside the TST to serve as the thesis supervisor, the student must first seek the permission of his or her Wycliffe faculty adviser and the director of basic degree studies. Such permission is rarely given. The student is entirely responsible for the thesis, and the role of the faculty supervisor is to offer guidance and comment. However, it is unwise for the student to embark in a direction against the advice of the faculty supervisor.

C. The student and the faculty supervisor compose a “Basic Degree Summative Exercise/Thesis Registration Form available on our website or from the registrar’s office. It will be counter-signed by the registrar and the director of basic degree studies. A TST course designator will be assigned, and the course title will include the phrase “M.Div. Thesis”. Completing this form represents an academic contract between the student, the faculty supervisor, and the College; the student is making a commitment to undertake the indicated work, the faculty supervisor is making a commitment to give advice and assistance, and the College is making a commitment to grant the student academic credit for this work when it is completed as prescribed.

D. The student and the faculty supervisor should meet regularly thereafter until the thesis is ready for submission. It is particularly important that they consult closely together as the student develops a topic, bibliography, and thesis statement. Although (or because) a thesis proposal is not required as a preliminary to writing the M.Div. thesis, the student and the faculty supervisor should do their best to ensure that they are communicating clearly with each other at this point. Serious problems can arise if the student acts too independently; he or she should undertake only such lines of research as the faculty supervisor can approve.

E. Should the student, in the course of research, think it advisable to change direction, he or she should first consult with the faculty supervisor.

F. Before the student submits the completed thesis, he or she should give the faculty supervisor an opportunity to read and comment on the final draft.

G. The deadline for the submission of the thesis is normally four weeks before the deadline established by the Wycliffe College registrar for the submission of marks for the term. The student and faculty member are free to negotiate a later deadline within the dates of the term. Where the student cannot complete the work by the end of term, he or she must apply to the registrar for an extension.