

Wycliffe College
Master of Theological Studies
Summative Exercise Guidelines

The final requirement for the MTS is a summative exercise (SE) worth either two or three credits. The following three options are available. Each is summarised here, then described in greater detail.

- A. An extended research paper – 40 pages (no more than 10,000 words).
- B. An integration paper – 40 pages (no more than 10,000 words).
- C. A thesis – 60 pages (no more than 15,000 words).
 - This is the only of the three options that is worth three credits.
 - An A- average in previous course work is required in order to write a thesis.

I. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Note: The following principles apply broadly to all three Summative Exercise (SE) options. Where a particular option has slightly different requirements, that will be noted in the fuller description.

- a. The standard approach to the SE is to do it over the Fall and Winter terms of your final year. Special arrangements can be made to do the SE over one term – either Fall, Winter, or Summer. These guidelines are written assuming the standard Fall/Winter approach. *Please be aware that you need to plan well ahead and make arrangements with the Registrar and Basic Degree (BD) Director if you want to do the SE over a single term.*
- b. Prior to the beginning of the Fall term (late August), you should register for the summative exercise with the registrar's office using the "Basic Degree Summative Exercise/Thesis Registration" form, available on the website under "Forms & Documents" or from the Registrar's Office. It will be counter-signed by the BD Director and the Registrar. A TST course number will be assigned, and the course title will include the phrase "MTS Summative Exercise". This form requires a concise statement of your proposed project and a provisional title.
- c. In the Fall there will be two sessions on writing a SE: the first in late September will introduce the nature of the project in general while the second in late October will provide you an opportunity to present a draft of your proposal to a wider group of faculty and students. The first session will be offered in person and synchronously online. If it is not possible for you to attend the first session it may be possible, with the permission of the BD Director, to view a recording of the sessions. If you cannot attend the second session please make alternate arrangements with your supervisor (see below).
- d. There is some advantage to deciding a potential topic earlier in your program, because then you can choose elective courses which will help prepare you for the SE. In the case of the MTS thesis option, this is particularly important, especially if you are thinking of it as preparation for a doctoral program.

Advisor

Early in the year in which you hope to graduate, if not sooner, you should decide which SE option you wish to pursue, choose a topic, and arrange to have a conversation with a potential supervisor. You can discuss possible supervisors at the writing sessions (above) or with your student advisor. You will submit a working title and if possible a brief bibliography to the BD Director who will coordinate with faculty to confirm a supervisor who will best be able to support your project. By the middle of October you should have had at least one discussion with your supervisor and be working on a proposal in preparation for the second group SE session in late October.

Guidelines about your SE supervisor:

- i. In most cases the supervisor will be a full member of the Wycliffe faculty.
 - ii. If there are weighty reasons for asking a person outside Wycliffe or TST to serve as the supervisor, the student must first obtain the permission of the BD Director.
 - iii. The student is entirely responsible for the paper, and the role of the supervisor is to offer guidance and comment. However, it is unwise for the student to embark in a direction against the advice of their supervisor.
 - iv. Should you, in the course of research, think it advisable to change your topic or the direction of the SE, you should first consult with your supervisor.
 - v. If either of you feels the need to change supervisor during the course of the thesis, this should be discussed with the BD Director.
- e. The Fall term provides you with an opportunity to begin working on your SE including developing a full bibliography and outlining your approach to the project. You are free to proceed with work on the SE before receiving notification as to whether the proposal has been approved, but you assume the risk that the supervisor will suggest changes in the proposal.
- f. You should meet with your faculty supervisor as necessary (approximately once a month) until the SE is ready for submission (approximately 3-4 meetings for the standard SE and 4-5 meetings for the thesis option). The supervisor may direct you to specific sources and/or make suggestions as to method, content, and style. At the same time, a high degree of independent work is assumed.
- g. By mid-October, with the guidance of your supervisor, you should have prepared a formal written proposal for the SE. More specific details about the form of proposal required for each SE are given below.
- h. The proposal will be either approved by the supervisor (sometimes with suggestions) or returned for changes. There is no limit to the number of times that a proposal may be revised and re-submitted, although it must be approved by the time you submit your SE Registration, which itself must be submitted prior to the TST deadline for Signed Approval Requests (usually in early December; see [TST Key Academic Dates](#) calendar for exact date).

- i. **Due Date:** The completed SE should normally be submitted to the supervisor four weeks before the last day of exams (see [TST Key Academic Dates](#) for exact date). However, a later date may be negotiated with the supervisor.
- j. **Short Reflection Paper:** At the same time as you submit the completed SE you are to submit a one-to-two-page reflection paper. In this short reflection paper you will engage in self-critical reflection on how your MTS studies have fostered intellectual, emotional, and spiritual growth. You will also offer some reflection on how your MTS studies have shaped directions for current and future ministry.

Questions to address in the reflection paper:

- What have you found most challenging during the MTS program and why?
 - What areas of study have been most rewarding for you personally and professionally?
 - What were your vocational goals when you entered the MTS program?
 - How have these goals changed and developed?
 - How would you characterize your goals now?
 - What are some of your ongoing learning goals?
- k. For most SE's, the supervisor is the only reader and examiner; in the case of the three-credit thesis, there are two readers (see details of thesis option below).
 - l. The supervisor will provide you with written comments and a grade; the latter will be submitted to the Registrar.
 - m. The SE must be written in proper English style and must be free of mistakes in grammar, syntax, spelling, and typography. Footnoting, bibliography, and other matters of format must follow a recognized form (e.g., Turabian, Chicago). Sources for quotations, close paraphrases, and distinctive ideas must be acknowledged. Inclusive language for humanity should be used as a matter of course.
 - n. The writing standard for the Toronto School of Theology is Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, 9th edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018). The SE does not demand strict compliance with these rules, but assumes their general frame as a guideline. The *Manual's* website also offers [a quick guide to Chicago style](#) that, although not exhaustive, should be enough to help you get started with the basics. The SE must be double spaced, in a 12-point font, and submitted electronically as a Word document unless your supervisor requires a paper copy. Margins should be 1 inch or a little more per side. It should be left justified. Pages should be numbered. A title page should be supplied.
 - o. Normally, the SE will be completed during the final semester of the year in which the student hopes to graduate. However, if an extension is necessary, the time limits for the completion of an SE are as follows:
 - 2-credit summative exercises: 2 semesters

- 3-credit thesis: 3 semesters

***Please note that if you have completed all your course work and need an extension for your SE you will be required to pay a placeholder fee to keep your student status active so that we can submit the grade. This is equivalent to the tuition and fees for a standard, semester-long course. If you are taking another course at the same time, then that will maintain your status and the placeholder is not required.

Under exceptional circumstances, an extension of one semester may be given beyond these limits. The student must, as with any other course, complete an extension form (available [on the Wycliffe website](#)) in order to have the extension approved.

II. TYPES OF SUMMATIVE EXERCISES

A) Extended Research Paper

Background and purpose

Like the MTS Thesis option, this paper should demonstrate appropriate academic skills in the use of primary sources and a sound critical appreciation of the secondary literature on the chosen topic. It should demonstrate familiarity with the significant issues raised by the topic and the range of possible differences in interpretation in dealing with those issues. It should reflect a capacity for independent judgment, scholarly argument, and good expository writing. It need not make an original contribution to knowledge.

While the Thesis is worth three credits, this Extended Research Paper is worth two credits. Unlike the Thesis, the Extended Research Paper requires only one faculty supervisor and no second reader.

Specific guidelines

1. The most common error in this kind of paper is defining a topic too broadly. The topic must be specific enough to enable you to engage in a thorough, systematic and intensive study of the relevant sources such that you can provide persuasive evidence to support your key claims. Your supervisor can help you in shaping a focused topic.
2. The Extended Research Paper proposal should include the following information:
 - a. The title of the proposed paper.
 - b. A brief statement (typically one sentence in length) representing the ‘thesis’ to be demonstrated. It is understood that the ‘thesis’ may well undergo revision in the course of research and writing, but it is important to have a goal in view as a way of focusing the investigation.

- c. An indication of the primary literature that will be used, why this literature is deemed relevant, and the method or methods which will be used to interpret and make use of the primary source material.
- d. The proposal 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. The student should indicate how the proposed paper would be related to the *status quaestionis*.
- e. Any necessary background, such as methodological considerations, the historical context of the proposed topic, or the wider implications of the proposed study. Occasionally a student may want to offer more personal reasons for selecting the proposed topic.
- f. A full bibliography (minimum of 5-8 resources). In principle, the student should already at this point be aware of all the relevant materials, and the bibliography in the proposal ought not to be very different from the bibliography that will appear in the final paper.
- g. The proposal is usually two pages in length, plus bibliography.

Rubric:

A research paper is a specific kind of writing, which should avoid generalizations, speculation, special pleading, and personal value judgments. However, it is appropriate for you to explore briefly the wider implications of your findings in a concluding chapter; here one is given latitude to adopt a more expansive tone.

The paper should be clearly organized with appropriate grammar and correct spelling. All parts of the paper should contribute directly or indirectly to demonstrating, clarifying, illustrating, or contextualizing the focus of the paper. The demonstration of your focus should proceed coherently. There should be an introduction, an exposition, and a conclusion. Chapter divisions are optional.

B) Integration Paper

Background and purpose

Students choosing this option will identify an important topic of manageable scope and address it in an essay of approximately forty pages. The intention is to integrate your learning with reference, as necessary, to biblical, theological, historical, and pastoral perspectives (you should focus on at least two of these disciplines in your paper). This provides you with the opportunity for disciplinary integration and integration between theory and praxis.

The integration paper is an invitation to make use of the basic skills of at least two of the theological disciplines in an interconnected way, to the extent that you have learned these skills through the MTS. coursework. This is what makes it a “summative exercise”.

Specific guidelines

1. The integration paper addresses a topic of importance to the life and thought of the Christian community. The topic will usually be broader than that of a research thesis, but it should not be so broad as to be unmanageable.
2. The Integration Paper proposal should include the following information:
 - a. The title of the proposed paper.
 - b. The topic of the paper, together with its importance and implications..
 - c. A statement of the purpose of the paper.
 - d. An indication of the contributions of at least two theological disciplines to an understanding of the topic. While each of the theological disciplines may be touched on in some manner, it would be unwise and indeed impossible to try to represent every discipline equally.
 - e. A statement of how the paper is to be organised. For instance, for the general topic of “prayer”, the integration essay might examine one or more biblical passages, issues raised by select theologians, elements of the historical understanding of prayer, and the implications of these things for the worship of Christian congregations today. It is also possible, and in most cases preferable, to find ways to integrate the disciplines. For instance, a narrative survey of how Christians within a particular denomination have understood and applied the biblical teaching on prayer.
 - f. A full bibliography. By the time the proposal is submitted, you should already be aware of most of the relevant materials, and the bibliography in the proposal ought not to be very different from the bibliography that will appear in the integration paper itself.
 - g. The proposal is usually two pages in length, plus bibliography.
3. The supervisor may want to suggest to you some models of integrative theological writing. Calvin’s *Institutes* and Barth’s *Church Dogmatics* are excellent examples in the Reformed tradition. Many classical Anglican sermons, such as some of the homilies of Edward VI and the sermons of the Caroline divines and John Henry Newman, are also fine models of the genre.
4. The integration paper is expected to reflect your understanding of the basic methods of the modern theological disciplines, but it will not be held to the standard of proof expected of a research thesis. It will not be possible for you to investigate every dimension of the chosen topic. Wisdom, rather than the learning of many things, should be the guidepost.

C) Thesis

Background and purpose

The MTS Thesis should demonstrate appropriate academic skills in the use of primary sources and a sound critical appreciation of the secondary literature on the chosen topic. It should demonstrate familiarity with the significant issues raised by the topic, and the range of possible differences in interpretation in dealing with those issues. It should reflect a capacity for independent judgment, scholarly argument, and good expository writing. It need not make an original contribution to knowledge.

Please note: Students are required to have an A- average (3.7 GPA) in their course work in order to pursue the thesis option.

Specific guidelines

1. The most common error in defining a thesis topic is defining it too broadly. The topic must be specific enough to enable the student to engage in a thorough, systematic and intensive study of the relevant sources such that you can provide persuasive evidence to support your key claims.
2. The thesis proposal should include the following information:
 - a. The title of the proposed thesis.
 - b. A thesis statement (no more than 150 words) articulating the claim to be demonstrated. It is understood that the thesis may well undergo revision in the course of research and writing, but it is important to have a goal in view as a way of focusing the investigation.
 - c. An indication of the primary literature that will be used, and why this literature is deemed relevant.
 - d. A statement of the *status quaestionis*, that is, the current state of scholarly discussion in the chosen area, demonstrating an appreciation of the relevant issues, themes, and differences of interpretation. The student should indicate how the proposed thesis would be related to the *status quaestionis*.
 - e. Any necessary background, such as methodological considerations, the historical context of the proposed topic, or the wider implications of the proposed study. Occasionally a student may want to offer more personal reasons for selecting the proposed topic.

- f. A full bibliography. In principle, the student should already at this point be aware of all the relevant materials, and the bibliography in the thesis proposal ought not to be very different from the bibliography that will appear in the thesis itself.
 - g. The thesis proposal is usually two pages in length, plus bibliography.
3. The student must submit an electronic copy or two physical copies of the proposal to the supervisor. The proposal will be discussed by the supervisor and a designated second reader to be agreed on by the supervisor and the student. It will be either approved (sometimes with suggestions), or returned for changes. Soon after this, the student and the supervisor should meet to discuss the status of the proposal.
 4. The thesis proposal serves as a kind of contract. The student is undertaking to write a thesis that conforms to the terms of the proposal. At the same time it is expected that the research may redirect the student in surprising ways. Any major changes in focus need to be approved by the supervisor. The readers are agreeing that if the thesis is successful at achieving what the proposal describes, it will be acceptable. However, the student is fully responsible for the academic quality of the thesis.
 5. The student should work reasonably closely with the supervisor, sharing their progress and evidence of their research at least monthly. The supervisor may direct the student to specific sources, and/or make suggestions as to method, content, and style. The thesis should not be submitted until the supervisor has approved it.
 6. The student should be aware that a thesis is a very specific kind of writing, which requires, in principle, the proof of every assertion, and which therefore must avoid generalizations, speculation, special pleading, and personal value judgments. However, it is appropriate for authors to explore briefly the wider implications of their findings in a concluding chapter; here one is given latitude to adopt a more expansive tone.
 7. Two physical copies or one electronic copy must be presented (one to the supervisor and one to the second reader) at least four weeks before the last day of exams (unless a later date is negotiated with the two readers).
 8. As outlined above, the thesis is evaluated by two readers, the primary of whom will be the supervisor of the thesis. Each reader will submit a written evaluation to the student as well as submitting a grade to the Registrar. If the two grades are reasonably congruent, the Registrar will average them and submit the result to the TST as the final evaluation (rounding off fractions in favour of the primary reader's evaluation). If the two evaluations are unusually discrepant, a third reader may be appointed.