



## Master of Arts in Theology (MAT) Guidelines for Writing the Research Paper

These guidelines are intended to give the student a general understanding of the nature of scholarly research on the Master of Arts level, as well as to provide him/her with some practical directives for the composition of the MAT research paper.

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### 1. GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The overall goal of the MAT research project is to demonstrate one's ability to address and investigate a problem or issue independently, intelligently, and critically. Although on the Master's level of higher education the student is not expected to make an original contribution to a particular field of learning, he/she ought to manifest both a disciplined capacity for logical and critical thought and a familiarity with current research methodology and resources.

There are four major objectives of a MAT research paper, namely: (1) to investigate the relevant dimensions of a problem or theme competently and thoroughly; (2) to analyze and interpret the meaning of the data; (3) to organize and assess the integral aspects of the problem (and to relate them critically to contemporary experience); (4) to communicate the significant data clearly, coherently, and with interest.

### 2. CHOICE OF TOPIC

Any directly theological theme, issue, or problem that admits of serious theoretical and critical study may be chosen. Moreover, at least one of the three required papers could include empirical research pertaining to the pastoral aspects of the topic, as long as such research be of appropriate quality and a sufficient theoretical perspective or focus be also present. Topics for the three MAT papers must be selected from three distinct disciplines or areas of theological study. In addition, while these papers may originate from a particular course or courses, they are not identical with papers that satisfy a normal course requirement (it may be possible; however, that part of a major MAT paper may serve as the project requirement for a specific course). In choosing and researching a suitable topic, the student is encouraged (but not obliged) to work in those areas that permit ample opportunity for the use of primary sources.

### 3. CRITERIA AND INTEGRAL PARTS

In general, each paper should be equivalent (in quality and length) to a major chapter or section of a Master's dissertation. Therefore, excluding notes, bibliography, and purely introductory material, the body of the text ought to contain a minimum of 30 pages.

The following parts must be present in every research paper:

- (a) *Title page* – In the center of this appears the title. Toward the bottom of the page, and centered, the following statement should be typed, namely, **Research Paper Submitted in Partial**

**Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master of Arts in Theology.** In the lower right corner of the title page, one should indicate his/her name, date, director, and seminary name and address.

- (b) *Table of Contents* – The principle divisions and subdivisions listed on the contents page should also appear in the text of the paper.
- (c) *List* – Illustrations, tables, and preface (only if needed).
- (d) *Text* – It includes a pertinent introduction and the main body of the paper, which usually consists of clearly defined divisions. Footnotes may appear here in their accustomed place, or they may be grouped together in a special section entitled **Notes** located near the end of the paper. The minimum length of the text itself is 30 pages.
- (e) *Appendix* – Only if needed.
- (f) *Bibliography* – Between 15-20 directly pertinent sources are expected. The bibliography may be divided according to primary and secondary sources (works by an author and works about him/her), or documentary sources (official ecclesiastical governmental, etc.) and secondary sources, or according to types of source materials (manuscripts, unpublished, printed, and edited). The bibliography ought not be classified according to books/monographs, and journal articles.
- (g) The following outline is suggested for those who do an empirical study as one of their research options:

- Introduction
- Theoretical framework
- Literature review
- Study design
- Analysis of data
- Interpretation
- Conclusion
- Lists of tables, graphs, illustrations
- Appendix (testing instrument, documentary data, etc.)
- List of references
- Bibliography

#### **4. MANUAL OF STYLE**

The preferred reference work concerning all typing details, footnote, and bibliography style as well as points of writing style is, *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 16<sup>th</sup> ed. (Chicago: The University Press, 2010).

#### **5. DIRECTOR**

The Seminary expects that an M.A. student will work on his/her research papers in active collaboration with one member of the resident faculty as a personal advisor. The student is to consult with the director on a regular basis, until the research project has been suitably terminated and approved. If for a reasonable cause a student desires to switch directors, this action must be approved by the Academic Dean, and the research paper must be re-registered by means of the pertinent form.

## **6. REGISTRATION AND APPROVAL**

Before beginning a particular research paper, the student is required to register his/her proposed research project by means of the pertinent form (to be obtained from the Academic Office) and to submit it along with the finished paper to the director and afterwards to the dean for the recording of their final approvals.

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