

October 2025 version

SAINT JOHN'S SEMINARY
B O S T O N , M A S S A C H U S E T T S



*M.A./M.T.S. THESIS
HANDBOOK*

2025 - 2026

MA / MTS THESIS HANDBOOK

Contents

Chapter 1: Program Description.....	3
1. A. Description of a M.A. or M.T.S. Master’s Thesis	3
1. B. Degree Descriptions	3
1. B. 1. Master of Arts (Theology) Degree	3
1. B. 2. Master of Theological Studies for the New Evangelization Degree	4
1. C. The Respective Roles of the Thesis Director and Readers	5
1. C. 1. Principal Work of the Director	6
1. C. 2. Principal Work of the Reader	6
1. C. 3. A Description of the Process:	7
1. D. The Application Process	8
1. D. 1. Application and Recommendation Form	8
Chapter 2: The Thesis Proposal.....	10
2. A. Requirements for the Thesis Proposal	10
2. A. 1. Sample M.A./MTS Thesis Proposal	11
2. B. M.A or M.T.S. Thesis Proposal Approval	13
Chapter 3: Writing the Thesis.....	14
3. A. Thesis Timetable	15
3. B. Requirements	16
3. C. Assignments	18
3. C. 1. Assignment 1: Getting Started: Steps to Formulating a Thesis Statement	18
3. C. 2. Assignment 2: Literature Review	22
3. C. 3. Assignment 3: Creating an Outline	22
3. C. 4. Assignment 4: Research	23
3. C. 5. Assignment 5: Writing the Paper: Body	24
3. C. 6. Assignment 6: Writing the Paper: Introduction	25
3. C. 7. Assignment 7: Writing the Paper: Conclusion	26
3. C. 8. Assignment 8: Writing the Paper: Abstract	26

3. C. 9. Assignment 9: Writing the Paper: Footnotes and Bibliography	26
3. C. 10. Assignment 10: Writing the Paper: The First Draft	27
3. C. 11. Assignment 11: Writing Your Paper: Revising and Turning in a Final Draft	27
Chapter 4: Defense Protocol and Publishing Guidelines	29
4. A. Format for Presentation of M.A./M.T.S. Thesis and Defense Protocol	29
4. B. M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Publishing Guidelines	31
4. B. 1. Sample Title Page: M.A./ M.T.S. Degree	33
4. B. 2. Sample Signature Page Sample*	34
4. B. 3. M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Defense Documents Checklist for Day of Defense	35
Chapter 5: SJS Leave of Absence Policy for the Master of Arts, Master of Arts in Ministry, and Master of Theological Studies	36
5. A. M.A./M.T.S. Leave of Absence Form	37
5. B. M.A./M.T.S. Continuation for M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Guidance	38
Appendix A. 2025-2026 SJS M.A./M.T.S. Faculty and Staff Contacts	39
Appendix B. 2025-2026 MTS Thesis Deadlines	40
.M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Deadlines 2025-2026	40
Deadlines for Submission of Defense-Ready Draft	40

Note: Website links must be copied and pasted into a browser as hyperlinks are not functional.

Chapter 1

Program Description

1. A. Description of a M.A. or M.T.S. Master's Thesis

The M.A. or M.T.S. Master's Thesis is a scholarly research paper of 65-80 pages composed of chapters. The thesis is an integrally ordered work which presents the author's thinking and resolution of some theological question—the question put forth in a faculty-approved thesis proposal. This resolution unfolds in the context of relevant primary and secondary theological literature used explicitly and with frequency in this thesis. In its format and citation, the thesis must conform to the SJS M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Publishing Guidelines (**Chapter 4.B.**) and, more generally, to *Chicago Manual of Style/Turabian*. The work of producing a thesis is an opportunity to enrich and deepen a student's understanding of a theological topic of interest with the help of experts in the field. Although a master's thesis may offer scholarship and judgements which are original or novel, a master's level thesis should first and foremost manifest a high degree of scholarly technique, a deep understanding of the topic, familiarity with the major relevant authors, and sound judgement and developed reasoning about the question at hand. Saying something new beyond the existing literature on the topic is not required or even expected.

1. B. Degree Descriptions

1. B. 1. Master of Arts (Theology) Degree

The Master of Arts (Theology) (M.A.(T.)) program is designed to provide an opportunity for qualified student seminarians and student priests to pursue in depth a specific aspect of their theological studies.

Scores from the Graduate Record Examination or a comparable graduate level examination to manifest the applicant's capacity for philosophical or speculative reasoning may be considered in the admission of a student to the M.A.(T.) program.

Student seminarians already enrolled in the Master of Divinity program and student priests applying for this program must have completed the first four semesters of the Theology Program curriculum (in the Master of Divinity program or its equivalent) and have maintained at least a B average to qualify for the M.A.(T.) program.

Students not enrolled in the Master of Divinity program, but only enrolled in the Master of Arts, typically select courses offered within the first three years of the Theology Program curriculum.

To obtain the Master of Arts degree, a student must complete a total of 42 credits. For students jointly enrolled in the Master of Divinity and Master of Arts degrees, 24 of the required 42 credits are fulfilled by a successful completion of the core courses in the third and fourth year of the Theology Program. In such a case where a student is earning credit for both degrees by means of the same course, a grade of B or above in every course is necessary to obtain credit

toward the Master of Arts degree. For students only enrolled in the Master of Arts program, 24 credits are drawn from suitable courses within the first three years of the Theology Program.

For all M.A.(T.) students, twelve credits are to be drawn from the elective courses which are in the candidate's area of concentration. Six credits are given for the writing, presentation and successful defense of a thesis. The successful defense of a thesis may result in two outcomes: (1) a successful passing with no revisions recommended, or (2) passing with revisions to be completed. A significant deficiency in the writing, presentation or defense of a thesis will result in a failure.

Each candidate must have adequate ability in at least one foreign language, modern or ancient, other than English. Students must demonstrate competence in a language related to the kinds of questions and research work central to their M.A.(T.) thesis proposal. Competency may be demonstrated either by successfully completing a language course through the beginner level, usually consisting of at least two three-credit courses of incremental language development, or by passing an exam of reading facility arranged for by the Academic Dean's Office. If earned language course credit was completed more than six years prior to the M.A.(T) research, then the language exam may be required.

Admission to the M.A.(T.) program is based on the recommendation of the candidate's formation advisor and/or approval of the Academic Dean. Thesis Candidacy will be considered by the Thesis Board, the members of which will be the Academic Dean and two other full-time faculty members. Candidates will be asked to submit a research writing sample, a statement of general goals and objectives relating to their interest for the M.A.(T.), including a proposed area of concentration, a preliminary proposal and outline of the thesis topic, and a bibliography. The Academic Dean will designate a faculty member who will serve as the candidate's Thesis Director to assist the candidate in the preparation of the thesis.

The Seminary curriculum, at the present time, provides for Master of Arts concentration in three areas: Biblical Studies, Historical Studies and Theology.

All requirements must be completed within four years of admission to Thesis Candidacy in the M.A. program. Please also refer to Saint John's Seminary Leave of Absence Policy (**Chapter 5**).

1. B. 2. Master of Theological Studies for the New Evangelization Degree

In response to the calls of recent popes to engage in the work of the New Evangelization, Saint John's Seminary offers laypeople, deacons, and religious the opportunity to pursue a Master of Theological Studies (M.T.S.) degree with a focus on the important apostolate of proclamation of the Gospel to an increasingly secularized world and outreach to baptized Catholics who have fallen away from the faith.

The Master of Theological Studies for the New Evangelization is an academic degree designed to expose students to the broad parameters of Catholic theology and to enable them to focus on a particular topic of interest to them. The degree is ideal for those working in other

professions who seek to augment their primary skill-set with a grounding in theology in order to more effectively evangelize the fields of culture, work, politics, and family. The M.T.S. degree seeks to provide students with a well-rounded, “whole-person” Catholic formation in the intellectual, apostolic, spiritual, and human spheres. A keystone of the M.T.S. formation program is the Formation Colloquium. The multi-faceted formation of the colloquium seeks to integrate the four dimensions of formation and exposes students to a wide range of theological, philosophical, literary, artistic, psychological, and apostolic concepts through reading, discussion, and lecture.

The curriculum includes a minimum of 38 credits — twelve courses (11 core courses and 1 elective), two semesters of colloquium, as well as two semesters of spiritual and human formation. Students must also complete the Evangelizing the Culture requirement. Lastly, students must either submit to comprehensive examinations or successfully defend a master-level thesis prior to Saint John’s Seminary conferring the M.T.S. degree.

The successful defense of a thesis may result in two outcomes: (1) a successful passing with no revisions recommended, or (2) passing with revisions to be completed. A significant deficiency in the writing, presentation or defense of a thesis will result in a failure.

Full and formal admission as an M.T.S. Thesis Candidate will be considered by the Thesis Board, the members of which will be the Academic Dean and two other full-time faculty members. Those wishing to write an M.T.S. thesis will be asked to submit a research writing sample, a statement of general goals and objectives relating to their interest in pursuing a thesis, including a proposed area of concentration, a preliminary proposal and outline of the thesis topic, and a bibliography. The Academic Dean will designate a faculty member who will serve as the candidate’s Thesis Director to assist the candidate in the preparation of the thesis.

The Seminary curriculum, at the present time, provides for Master of Theological Studies thesis concentration in four areas: Biblical Studies, Historical Studies, Theology, and Evangelization.

All requirements must be completed within four years of admission as an M.T.S. Thesis Candidate. Please also refer to Saint John’s Seminary Leave of Absence Policy (**Chapter 5**).

1. C. The Respective Roles of the Thesis Director and Readers

When writing an M.A. or M.T.S. thesis, a student works principally with a Thesis Director and, secondarily, with two Readers. The Director and two Readers constitute the Thesis Committee, of which the Director serves as chair. The Thesis Committee assists the student in producing the thesis, judges the quality of the thesis—determining if it is complete and ready for defense—attends and is a chief participant in the thesis defense and, finally, grades the thesis and defense.

1. C. 1. Principal Work of the Director

The candidate shall understand that it is his responsibility to submit a thesis that is correct regarding grammar, syntax, and Chicago Style. A thesis submitted to the Director and readers that fails with regard to any of the above in the determination of the director in any stage of the process will be returned to the student for correction, rewriting and resubmission.

The principal work of oversight for the thesis project rests with the Director, who assists the student to choose or focus his or her subject and to select Readers. The Director guides the student through initial drafts and revisions, assisting the student to set realistic goals (See Chapter 3. Writing a Thesis). Having guided the student through the significant phases of research, writing and revision, it is the Director who indicates to the student when the thesis draft is ready to be submitted to the Readers. With this Director-Approved Draft, student and Director aim to provide readers with a complete and near final draft of the thesis. The candidate is required to send the Director-Approved Draft to the Reader(s) electronically, copying the Director and M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Coordinator no later than four weeks prior to the fall or spring semester thesis submission deadlines in the SJS Catalogue. Accordingly, a reader can expect to receive said Draft on or about October 15 for a fall defense, and March 15 for a spring defense. Failure to give Reader(s) sufficient time to read and revise a thesis may result in postponement of a defense.

The date on which a student must submit the Defense-Ready Draft, approved by the Director and Readers, is posted each semester in the SJS Academic Catalogue. In the fall semester, the date is typically in mid-November; in the spring semester, the date is typically in mid-April (see Appendix B). As a general rule, a student wishing to defend in a fall semester should send the Director-Approved Draft to the Readers no later than October 15 of the semester; a student wishing to defend in the spring semester should send no later than March 15. The student should communicate ahead of time with the Director and Readers when they are likely to receive drafts, as well as the deadlines and dates with which the student must comply. Given their other responsibilities, Directors and Readers may need ample time to attend to a thesis.

The candidate shall understand that it is his responsibility to submit a thesis that is correct regarding grammar, syntax, and Chicago Style. A thesis submitted to the Director and readers that fails with regard to any of the above in the determination of the director in any stage of the process will be returned to the student for correction, rewriting and resubmission.

1. C. 2. Principal Work of the Reader

The Reader provides confirmation as to the quality of the thesis and tries—while assuming a lesser role than the Director, and in collegiality with the Director—to enhance the final stage of the project with his or her own experience, expertise and judgment.

The proper role of the Reader is to ensure a certain academic completeness proper to an M.A./M.T.S. thesis and to serve as a final means by which an oversight in the drafted thesis might be caught—an oversight in argument, bibliography/reference, composition, format, or use of speech and typography. The Reader is generally not expected to bring about a major revision of the paper, but rather, the Reader offers possible and measured supplements to, or suggestions on, the paper at the stage of a Director-Approved Draft. Readers also may provide editing suggestions. A Reader can expect to receive a Director-Approved Draft on or about October 15 for which he or she is expected to return recommendations for revision in time for them to be made before mid-November for a Fall defense; a Reader can expect to receive a Director-Approved Draft on or about March 15 with the same expectation in mid-April for a Spring defense.

¹ Kate L. Turabian, *et al.*, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, Ninth Edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018).

The candidate must notify/copy the MA/MTS Thesis Coordinator when sending draft(s) to a Reader. The MA/MTS Thesis Coordinator and, in the absence of a Coordinator, the Academic Dean's office, will confer with candidates and readers to insure observation of these deadlines. Readers who prefer to receive chapter-by-chapter drafts, or who require a different time-table, are encouraged to make arrangements with the Director and the Candidate, with the advice of the M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Coordinator. In its format and citation, the thesis must conform to the SJS M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Publishing Guidelines (Chapter 4B), and more generally, to the Chicago Manual of Style/Turabian, Ninth Edition.¹ Readers with experience of thesis work at SJS also help to ensure that a thesis is generally comparable, or superior, in quality to past SJS M.A./M.T.S. theses.

1. C. 3. A Description of the Process

Having received the Director-Approved Draft from the student, the Reader(s) then present(s) to the student any questions or requests for alterations or improvements to the thesis. Should any serious issues arise, the Director and the Readers work these issues out in a collegial way. If the Director so determines, a Reader with special expertise may be brought in to comment more extensively on parts of the draft during this phase. Once the student has made all alterations, the student resends the thesis draft to the Director and Readers jointly. Once each Reader signals satisfaction with the draft, the draft becomes a Director-Approved Defense-Ready Draft; the Director then approves of the electronic submission by the student to the M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Coordinator (or in the absence of a Coordinator, the Academic Dean's Office). When the student submits the Defense-Ready Draft to the M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Coordinator, the student also copies the Director and both Readers.

Each SJS M.A./M.T.S. thesis must be publicly defended by its author. Once the Coordinator approves of the submission, the Thesis Defense is scheduled by the Coordinator in consultation with the Thesis Director and the Reader(s). At the defense, a member of the Thesis Committee may request further modifications to the thesis. These modifications are usually not major. When the Committee meets together during the defense, it may formally vote to accept the thesis as it is, to accept it on condition of some revision, or not to accept it. In the case of "acceptance upon condition of revision," the student must resubmit the thesis to the Committee after the defense with modifications.

With the approval of the Director, the student must submit the final PDF version of the thesis to the Dean's Office and to the Thesis Coordinator for binding and inclusion in the SJS M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Series. When submitting electronic copies to the Dean's Office and the Thesis Coordinator, the student should copy the Director and Readers. The student must also present a printed copy of the thesis to the Academic Dean's office (**Chapter 4.B.3**). For the complete format of the M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Defense, please also consult the SJS M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Defense documents (**Chapter 4**).

1. D. The Application Process

This fully completed form is to be submitted to the Academic Dean’s Office no later than the Friday of the first week of November for a student interested in beginning to write a thesis in the M.A. or M.T.S program during the fall semester of a given calendar year, and no later than the Friday of the second week of March for the spring semester.

1. D. 1. Application and Recommendation Form

- 1. Application Date: _____
- 2. Student Name: _____
- 3. Status at St. John’s Seminary (circle one):

Seminarian
M.T.S. Student
- 4. For a Seminarian—Sponsoring diocese or community: _____
- 5. Formation advisor: _____

Directions: Each student is asked to meet with his advisor and to discuss the question of academic and formation readiness for undertaking the research M.A. degree or M.T.S. thesis option at St. John’s Seminary. Following this meeting, the formation advisor is asked to sign and indicate his recommendation below. The formation advisor is invited to submit any relevant notes or reflections to the M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Board. The requirements for the M.A. research degree and M.T.S. degree are found in the description of the programs in the preceding pages.

After careful consideration of the requirements of the research M.A. degree or M.T.S. thesis option at St. John’s Seminary, I (circle one) recommend / do not recommend that my advisee undertake this course of study.

Signed: _____
Formation Advisor

6. List of foreign languages studied:

#	Language/Place studied	Number years of study/Level
1		
2		
3		

7. Previous education (list college and graduate level studies and degrees; you may attach a list in a separate document, if you prefer):

#	Institution	Dates	Courses taken OR	Degree obtained

8. Please indicate here your topic of interest or possible thesis title.

9. Please list here the name of the professor(s) on the faculty of St. John’s Seminary whom you would choose as a Thesis Director. This professor(s) should either have written, researched or taught in the general area of your thesis topic.

10. Please attach in a separate document any writing sample that demonstrates your readiness to undertake the research M.A. degree or M.T.S. thesis. The writing sample should ideally be a sample of past research done in an academic setting or for an academic journal or publication.

Chapter 2

The Thesis Proposal

2. A. Requirements for the Thesis Proposal

Introduction or Background to the Question or Problem that the Thesis Addresses:*

- Articulate this introduction or background in a way that makes the intellectual difficulty or problem clear. Tie the knot—so to speak, that the thesis will attempt to untie.**
- Frame the question by articulating where this question falls within theology.
- Provide a theological context and/or historical background for the question (One or two paragraphs in length).

Thesis Statement of the Question or Problem that the Thesis Addresses:

- Articulate concisely the specific question or problem that the thesis is to address.
- Articulate concisely how this question or problem will be answered by the thesis, i.e., how will you untie the knot that you have tied for the reader above. (One long paragraph or two shorter paragraphs in length.)

Method and Structure:

- In greater detail, draw out how the question or problem will be answered, i.e.,
 - Articulate the theological method(s) employed to answer the question or problem.
 - State the textual division of the work, i.e., how many chapters (and subsections) are intended, and what is the specific content of each section? Explain the reason for these textual divisions and indicate why they are placed in the order proposed. (Approximately three to four paragraphs.)
- You should work with your Thesis Director in devising this proposal.
- The text of the proposal must be at least 1½ pages and no more than two pages.
- A bibliography of at least one full page must accompany the proposal. Carefully follow *Turabian/Chicago Manual of Style* for a bibliography.
- For both the text of the proposal and the bibliography use either Times New Roman or Garamond 12-point type and one-inch margins.
- If these instructions are not followed carefully, the proposal will not be considered.
- Please submit a copy of the proposal to the Academic Dean's Office.

*See MA/MTS Thesis Guide: Step-by-Step Guide from Initial Research to Writing A Defensible Thesis for Director and Students: Assignment 1, Getting Started: Steps to Formulating a Thesis Statement (3.C.1).

**See Sample Thesis Statement (2.A.1) immediately below.

2. A. 1. Sample M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Proposal

The Freedom of the Sons of God: A Theological Foundation for the *Spiritual Exercises* in the Writings of Hans Urs von Balthasar*

Name of the Author of the Proposal

Introduction

The *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola have proven their value through five centuries, forming and nourishing countless saints. In the course of the *Spiritual Exercises* retreat, the retreatant contemplates the whole breadth of salvation history, and is led by grace to understand and embrace his God-given role within the ongoing work of salvation. The foundation for this “election” is a graced freedom which allows the Christian to prefer the will of God to everything else. In Ignatian terminology, this freedom is called “indifference.” St. Ignatius himself says that this freedom is the very purpose of the retreat: the goal is to help “the soul to rid itself of all inordinate attachments” for the sake of “seeking and finding the will of God in the disposition of our life for the salvation of our soul.”

St. Ignatius provides some practical guidance for actions that the individual retreatant can take to grow into this graced freedom. However, as a grace, it must primarily be received from God as a free gift. The text of the *Spiritual Exercises* is meant to serve as a handbook for a retreat director, and as such does not go into a detailed description of this freedom or of how it is to be received. Rather, the answer seems to lie implicitly within the retreat: the retreatant appropriates this graced freedom through the contemplation of salvation history as a whole, and of the person of Jesus Christ in particular. The diligent director of the *Exercises* naturally desires to understand more: What characterizes this graced freedom? What is its ontological or anthropological root? How is it best appropriated?

Question Statement

Christ is the exemplar of human perfection. If the *Exercises* are an instrument of human perfection in sanctity, then the freedom which they are intended to cultivate is at the heart of that perfection. Therefore, this freedom must be found in Christ. What characterizes this graced freedom found in Christ and his revelation of the Father? How does the contemplation of Christ lead to the appropriation of this grace?

The theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar provides striking answers to these questions. His theology frames the whole of salvation history as the dramatic interaction of Divine and creaturely freedom. Man, as a creature, enters into his proper freedom through the contemplation of Christ, because this act of contemplation assimilates man to Christ and incorporates man into Christ. Von Balthasar provides a robust theology of this assimilation and incorporation. However, von Balthasar’s theology goes yet deeper: Christ is the exemplar of this graced freedom because this freedom is found within the inner life of the Trinity. The eternal Son of God is himself the perfection of Ignatian indifference.

Method and Structure

This thesis is primarily focused on the *Spiritual Exercises*. It is therefore fittingly classed as a study in spiritual theology, with the subordinated disciplines of moral theology and theological anthropology. Its approach to spiritual theology is enriched by von Balthasar’s uniquely Ignatian Christology and Trinitarian Theology.

*Printed and distributed with the permission of the author.

This thesis will begin with an investigation of the graced freedom central to the *Exercises*, and how it is understood by a number of prominent Ignatian scholars. This serves to provide context for a study of von Balthasar's theology and its practical implications for the giving of the *Exercises*. In the next chapter, this thesis will introduce Hans Urs von Balthasar's understanding of this freedom, and the importance he gives it in the Christian life and in the *Exercises*. Von Balthasar's approach to this freedom is unique, and is best understood in dialog with the approaches presented in chapter one.

In a third chapter, this thesis will investigate the Trinitarian and Christological foundation of this freedom in the theology of von Balthasar. This will largely rely on his "trilogy," *The Glory of the Lord*, *Theo-Drama*, and *Theo-Logic*. In a fourth chapter, this thesis will turn to the experience of the retreatant, showing how von Balthasar's theology accounts for the reception of this grace through assimilation to Christ, and how this takes form within the *Exercises*. Here his writings on prayer, such as *Christian Meditation*, and on vocation, such as *The Christian State of Life*, will prove very helpful. A brief fifth chapter will summarize the findings of this investigation.

[One Page Bibliography Required]



2. B. M.A. or M.T.S. Thesis Proposal Approval

Dear [Name of Thesis Candidate],

Your thesis proposal has been approved by the SJS M.A./M.T.S. Faculty Thesis Board. The thesis is entitled: [title]. The Seminary requires the Thesis Candidate to submit a thesis with a title that has been approved. Should the candidate wish to alter the title in any way, permission must be granted by the Academic Dean to do so. Submitting a thesis with an unapproved title will result in the rejection of the thesis.

Having received formal approval of your thesis proposal, you are now a Thesis Candidate for the M.A./M.T.S. degree.

Academic Dean, St. John's Seminary

Date

CC: [name, title], Thesis Director

Chapter 3

Writing the Thesis

SJS M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Guide:

Step-by-Step Guide from Initial Research to Submitting a Defense-Ready Thesis for Director & Student²

The Master's Thesis is a highpoint of a your theological studies in the M.A. and M.T.S degree programs at St. John's Seminary. You now are given the opportunity to draw from what you have learned in your previous classes and to engage in deep, sustained, and focused research into an area of theology that greatly interests you. Your Faculty Thesis Director and Readers facilitate your progress, guide you in your research, and evaluate your work. The thesis, however, is an opportunity for *you* to chart your own course, applying your critical thinking, reading, and writing skills in the research and composition of a scholarly paper. The thesis experience is designed for the mature student nearing completion of the Master's Degree. It is strongly recommended for students who are discerning licentiate or doctoral studies. **Please note that in order to graduate in December/May of a given year, a student must have completed and submitted a final, Defense-Ready Draft to the M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Coordinator by the specific date indicated in the SJS Academic Calendar for that year. Completion dates fall on-or-around mid-November and mid-April, respectively.**

The thesis-writing process is here divided into measurable assignments, many of which will be submitted to your Director. Please consult with your Readers to see if they also would like to receive any of these early assignments prior to receiving a first full draft. Your Thesis Director has the authority to require or forego any assignments to be completed in the course of writing the thesis, including tasks not enumerated in this guide. In exceptional circumstances, the order and the precise tasks found in this guide may not need to be followed. For example, for some students, enough preliminary research has already been done in other courses to forego some of the first tasks. But those cases are likely to be rare.

The following assignments refer to section numbers in the Ninth Edition of the Turabian *Manual for Writers*. If you have not already done so, please obtain a copy of the book, not only for referencing but also for the research and writing process. The full reference is:

Kate Turabian, ed., Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, Ninth Edition: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers* (Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), available in the St. John's Bookstore.

² Adapted by Dr. Angela Franks from the Master's Thesis Guidelines originally written by Dr. Patricia Ireland for St. Joseph's College, Maine.

For most students pursuing the thesis with few other obligations, there will be a maximum of a full month of preparation and then two full semesters to complete the thesis. (Thesis continuation is possible beyond that for \$675/semester for up to four years from the official approval of one's thesis proposal. Seminarians in the M.A. program are encouraged to start sooner, i.e., through 3rd and 4th theology. While this may seem like a lot of time, if you do not keep up with the suggested guidelines for your tasks, the time may slip away unawares. Below is a *rough guide* of the time you should devote to each step. You can break down the time by percentage spent on a task or by the calendar week by which this task should be accomplished, depending on your goal for completion.

In the timeline that follows, the time for thesis work is assumed to be nine months (36 weeks, roughly from preliminary work beginning in August or in the previous semester through the mid-April deadline for thesis submission. Note that the bulk of your time will be spent researching and writing. Your Director may ask for assignments to be completed by due-dates other than the ones indicated in this timeline. Also keep in mind that, after reviewing an assignment, your Director may ask you to revise and resubmit it.

Ideally Assignment 1, Picking a Topic, Preliminary Research and Tentative Thesis will have been completed prior to submission of your Thesis Proposal, in a preliminary 4 or 5 weeks before your first full semester of thesis work. Assignment 1 provides you with the tools you need to submit a strong proposal and to get off to a good start on your thesis. In this case, your thesis Director may not yet have been approved. Nevertheless, it is strongly recommended that you work with your proposed Thesis Director or another willing faculty member on this first step so that you have some guidance in this important process. The timeline below assumes that you have completed this work prior to the first semester of formal thesis work, in order to have your proposal approved before or near the beginning of the new semester.

Please consult with your Director concerning the exact timetable he would like you to follow. The yearly SJS calendar will give deadlines based on the 36-week timetable below.

3. A. Thesis Timetable

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Deadlines</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>36 wks</u>
1. Assignment 1: Picking a Topic, Preliminary Research, and Tentative Thesis	15%	5
2. Assignment 2: Literature Review, based on Preliminary Research	5%	7
3. Assignment 3: Developing a Working Outline	5%	9
4. Assignment 4: Researching	20%	16
5. Assignment 5: Writing the Body	20%	23
6 & 7. Assignments 6 & 7: Writing the Introduction and Conclusion	5%	25
8. Assignment 8: Writing the Abstract (required)	5%	27
9. Assignment 9: Revising the Footnotes and Bibliography	5%	29
10. Assignment 10: Finishing the First Draft	5%	31
11. Assignment 11: Revising and Turning in Final Draft	15%	36

Your Thesis Director will provide comments, criticism, corrections, recommendations, etc., during all processes. Please follow rules for correct punctuation and grammar at all stages; consult Turabian, Ninth Edition (reference above) for detailed information.

3. B. Requirements

Quick Style, Formatting, and Referencing Guidelines for the Thesis	
Font	Times New Roman and Garamond – 12 point
Spacing	<p><i>Line Spacing:</i> Double</p> <p><i>Paragraph Spacing:</i> <u>No</u> extra line spacing between paragraphs. Please adjust the auto line spacing “before” and “after” to zero.</p> <p><i>Section Heading</i> in the Body of your paper: Triple space the lines before a new heading or section.</p> <p><i>Sentence Spacing:</i> It has become standard practice to insert a single space following a period and before the next sentence.</p>
Page Format	See guidelines in Turabian’s <i>Manual</i> in Appendix A.
Tone	A thesis is an academic exercise. Be sure to keep an academic tone, and avoid the first person as a general rule (on the latter, see Turabian, section 11.1.7). Save emotions, sarcasm, and large, unsubstantiated claims for your blog.
Citations	Footnotes (not parenthetical citations), in Turabian format. The exceptions include the following: Scriptural citations (although indicate the translation used in the Bibliography) and Church documents (use the standard abbreviation after the first usage). Church documents are referenced by paragraph, not by page number.
Bibliography	Turabian formatting. For Church documents such as conciliar documents and the <i>Catechism</i> , omit an author and begin with the title of the document. For papal documents, cite the pope as author, of course.
Pronoun Use	While in everyday speech and often in informal writing, using “their” or “them” in reference to a single “person” is common, this will not be accepted for the formal writing of your thesis paper. There must be agreement in number between the noun and the pronoun. It is perfectly acceptable to use the universal “he.” To do so is not a concession to sexism. However, if you prefer, you may choose to use “she” instead of “he,” or you may use “he or she” if the context calls for it. The most important rule is to be consistent.

<p>Final Thesis Submission Format</p>	<p>For the precise format, follow Thesis Publishing Guidelines (Chapter 4) and Turabian, Appendix A.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Title Page2. Signature Page3. Abstract Page (1-2 paragraphs). Abstract type: Informational Abstract[Optional: Dedication and/or Epigraph Page (1 page)][Optional: List of Abbreviations (1-2 pages)]4. Table of Contents (list page numbers next to <i>Chapter and Subsection Headings</i>)5. Introduction (the topic being researched, the thesis statement and the methods used in your research; this is usually 1-2 pages)6. Body (development of thesis according to Chapter and Section headings; 65-80 pages)7. Conclusion (1-2 pages)8. Bibliography <p><i>(Total number of pages, including all components above: 75-100 pages)</i></p>
---------------------------------------	--

3. C. Assignments

3. C. 1. Assignment 1: Getting Started: Steps to Formulating a Thesis Statement

For more background to this assignment, see Turabian, Part I, Section 2: Defining a Project: Topic, Question, Problem, Working Hypothesis.

Again, this assignment is completed *before* you submit your Thesis Proposal.

The thesis statement is not the beginning of your research. It is the end process of your *preliminary* thinking and research. First, start out with a **topic**, which should be broad. Do some initial searches on the topic to determine what has been done, what piques your interest, and what areas need further development, all of which lead to a **focused topic**. Next, formulate a **research question**. This is narrower than the focused topic, but it is expansive enough to allow for a number of thesis statements. As a question, it begs more formal database research than general searches on your broad or focused topic. Here, you will keep a log of the databases and sources you have consulted. From this intermediary research, you will be able to formulate a working **thesis statement**. The process is outlined below.

Topic → Focused Topic ⇨ **Research Question** → Research Log ⇨ **Thesis Statement**

1. Decide on a relatively broad **topic** and narrow it to a **focused topic**

Conduct cursory searches on the topic to determine

What has been done on the topic?

What piques your interest?

What areas need further development?



2. Develop a **research question**

Keep a log of preliminary database research on *keywords* related to your research question.



3. Formulate a **thesis statement** from your topic, research question and research log. This assignment is not locking you into this thesis as your permanent position. It may be modified through the course of your research and writing. But it is a good starting-point.

Example

1. **Topic** (broad → focused)

The New Evangelization (broad) → *Comparison with the early Church's evangelization* (focused)

Cursory search of the broad topic reveals significant similarities with the ways in which the early Church evangelized in a pluralistic setting.



2. Research Question (focused perspective)

What is distinctive about the New Evangelization, and how does it compare with the way in which the early Church evangelized the Gentiles?

Research Log (generated from keyword searches related to your Research Question)

Database research using keywords related to the research question, the findings of which are written in a log.

Use the Capella University Research Log as a template: (copy and paste links into your browser)

<https://capellauniversity.libguides.com/az/databases>

For help with keyword searches, check out the following:

CRLS Research Guide:

http://www.crlsresearchguide.org/02_Listing_Key_Words.asp

For an overview of theological research using databases and primary sources (with the caveat that many of the recommended secondary sources are not very helpful), see the Boston College Theology Guide: https://libguides.bc.edu/tml/research_guides

For help with theological research and database usage consult the librarians of the BC/SJS Theology and Ministry Library (TML).



3. Thesis Statement (focused, limited, able to be substantiated through reasoned argumentation—this is your *argument*)

The New Evangelization offers great hope for conversion because its foundation, character and approach spring from the kerygma of the early Church as she engaged the Hellenized world and transformed the Gentiles.

The Thesis Statement needs to do three things:

1. The thesis states your position

What's old is new: New Evangelization has solid grounding in history and tradition.

2. The thesis frames the discussion and reveals how you will organize your argument.

You will compare the New Evangelization with the early Church's preaching to the Gentiles and the elements and results thereof.

3. The thesis points to your final conclusion.

The sure footing of the New Evangelization in the Early Church's response to Jesus' Great Commission brings hope for the renewal of the Church in an increasingly alien and hostile world.

Tips and Examples for Writing Thesis Statements: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/the_writing_process/thesis_statement_tips.html

ASSIGNMENT 1 SUMMARY

Submit in the following order, waiting for feedback from your (potential) Director between each of the three parts in Assignment 1, unless your Director modifies this assignment:

1. **Discuss the topic** with your Director in person, by phone or e-mail.

2. **Submit in writing:**

A. your **topic, focused topic, and research question**

B. **one or two paragraphs about the process** by which you arrived at your research question. Wait for a response from your instructor.

3. After hearing from your instructor on your topic and research question, **submit a Research Log** (generated from **Database keyword searches** related to your **Research Question**)

*Follow the instructions below on how to do a **Research Log**:*

A. **You need at least 10 keyword searches.** If you don't find anything with a particular keyword, record that.

For help with keyword searches, check out the following:

CRLS Research Guide:

http://www.crlsresearchguide.org/02_Listing_Key_Words.asp

and Marquette University Raynor Memorial Library Keyword Power Point **Tutorial**:

<https://libguides.marquette.edu/az.php>

For an overview of theological research using databases and primary sources (with the caveat that many of the recommended secondary sources are not very helpful), see the Boston College Theology Guide:

https://libguides.bc.edu/tml/research_guides

B. Make sure you consult the Religious Studies and Humanities Databases listed on the BC/SJS Theology and Ministry Library databases (ATLA Religion Database; Catholic Periodical and Literature Index; JSTOR):

<http://libguides.bc.edu/theologyportal>

C. Use the Capella University Research Log as a template

<https://capellauniversity.libguides.com/az/databases>

See example, below:

DATABASE RESEARCH LOG

Research Question: What is distinctive about the New Evangelization, and how does it compare with the way in which the Early Church evangelized to the Gentiles?

<u>DATE</u>	<u>DATABASE NAME</u>	<u>KEYWORDS</u>	<u>RESULTS</u>
<u>January 30</u>	<u>JSTOR</u>	<u>(Early Church evangelization) and Gentiles</u> <u>(Early Church evangelization) and preaching</u> <u>(Early Church evangelization) and Hellenization</u> <u>(Early Church evangelization) and development of doctrine</u>	<u>Good, found 15 results; need to search more primary sources of the Early Church Fathers' homilies.</u>

3. C. 2. Assignment 2: Literature Review

For more background to this assignment, see Turabian, Part I, Section 3.

The literature review is about ideas, so it is *not* a commentary on particular sources, as is an annotated bibliography. **You refer to the sources in reference to your idea** (potentially in all of its parts: topic, focused topic, research question, and thesis statement). You need not extensively peruse each item; rather, you are looking for trends in the secondary literature and how your thesis will fit into the scholarly landscape. (Please note that it may fit into the scholarly landscape by being quite critical of current scholarship.) A few of the published pieces will merit a closer look, which you have probably already given them as part of Assignment 1.

Your literature review has an **introduction, body, and conclusion**, which serve to tell the reader *why* you are doing your research, i.e., why is your thesis important. This is in **essay** form, commenting on the preliminary research you have done, telling what has been done on the topic, and more importantly, what has not been done. **Your literature review makes a case for why your thesis is timely, relevant, and important.**

If you wish, a revised version of this literature review may follow the abstract in your final thesis.

ASSIGNMENT 2 SUMMARY

Unless your Director modifies this assignment, once your Director has approved your thesis statement, submit a 1-2 page **Literature Review**. This should utilize the findings of your preliminary research on your topic and the results of your Research Log.

After receiving feedback from your Director, submit your **Thesis Proposal** to your Director.

3. C. 3. Assignment 3: Creating an Outline

For more background to this assignment, see Turabian, Part I, Section 6.

The outline is an essential step in the writing of your paper, as it will help you organize your research and make sure that you stay within the parameters of your thesis. *Remember: you are building an argument in your thesis.* The ideas should follow one another like bricks laid one-by-one to make a house, not like beads strung randomly on a string. Do note that this outline will likely change as a result of your research. This preliminary work is to help you see what you need to research. Please study the guidelines for writing an outline below.

Check *Purdue Owl's* tutorial on creating outlines: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/the_writing_process/developing_an_outline/how_to_outline.html

Types of outlines and sample outlines:

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/media/pdf/20081113013048_544.pdf

ASSIGNMENT 3 SUMMARY

Submit a working **outline** of your paper to your Thesis Director.

3. C. 4. Assignment 4: Thesis Proposal (see Chapter 2, The Thesis Proposal)

Once your Thesis Director approves your Outline, through your Thesis Director, submit your **Thesis Proposal and Bibliography** to the SJS M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Coordinator for consideration by the SJS M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Board. The Board meets on-or-around August 15 in the fall, and on-or-around January 15 in the spring.

ASSIGNMENT 4 SUMMARY

Please see the instructions and documents provided in Chapter 2 on developing and submitting a Thesis Proposal. **Submit a final Thesis Proposal through your Director to the M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Board.**

3. C. 5. Assignment 5: Research

For more background to this assignment, see Turabian, Part I, Section 4.

You have reached the stage in which you will be engaging in focused, in depth and sustained research for your thesis. Below are a few tips to help streamline and organize this process.

Before beginning this process, learning to use RefWorks from the Boston College/St. John's Seminary Theology and Ministry Library (TML) will be enormously helpful. Frequent workshops are offered at the TML library.

1. Research according to your **Outline**.

Have your outline in front of you while you research. As you read, when you find a helpful source, code it to your outline in separate electronic and/or paper files, so that when you are ready to write, you will be looking at the research related to the particular outline topic, rather than hundreds of pages or index cards.

Only use the sources that relate to your outline. Even if you find something compelling or fascinating, if it is not germane to the thesis, do not use it.

For books and journal articles not in the BC/SJS Theology and Ministry Library system, please utilize interlibrary loan:
<https://libguides.bc.edu/interlibrary-loan>

2. When you decide to use a particular source, enter it into RefWorks or directly onto your **Bibliography page in correct Turabian format**. This is enormously helpful, because...

- a. You will be sure to have all the information needed for the bibliography and the footnotes.
 - b. Your bibliography will be completed ahead of time and in perfect Turabian format.
 - c. You always can delete a source you find is not necessary; however, it is very difficult and time-consuming to add information for a source you used but returned to the library.
 - d. Include the page numbers, chapter, section, and/or paragraph number (depending on the type of source) on every piece of research, so your footnotes will be complete.
 - e. If you think something will be good as a quotation, take it down word for word. You always can change your mind later and put it in your own words.
3. Make sure your bibliography is diverse, including books, articles, websites, etc. Research a variety of sources.
 4. Feel free to begin **preliminary drafts of chapters** during this research phase, as ideas come to mind. You should also begin to modify your preliminary thesis statement and outline if needed.

ASSIGNMENT 5 SUMMARY

Call or e-mail your Thesis Director periodically about your progress on your **research** and to ask guidance, if needed.

Continue working on your own, researching and paying attention to the guidelines for researching in Assignment 4.

3. C. 6. Assignment 6: Writing the Paper: Body

For more background to this assignment, see Turabian, Part I, Sections 6-9.

The **Body** of the research paper/thesis is between 65 and 80 pages in length and divided into Chapter **Headings**, which are listed in the Table of Contents. A rule of thumb is that the information becomes more specific and directed the farther along you go in the paper. Think of it as the way a trial attorney presents his case, starting with general introductions and a statement of the conclusion he *hopes* the jury will make, moving towards ever more specific and compelling information, until he reaches the crescendo, that is, the closing argument (**Conclusion**). The closing argument of a trial derives its strengths or weaknesses from the way in which the **Body** of evidence and testimony has been presented. The **Body** of testimony is so important that a defendant will be pronounced guilty or innocent on the strengths or weaknesses of its arguments.

As you write, be sure to **footnote** extensively. Remember to cite, not only direct quotations, but any idea that is not your own. Your paper should have a large number of footnotes. It is not unusual for almost every sentence in a scholarly paper to be footnoted. Your paper is stronger if you can support your argument every step of the way.

The *Purdue Owl* page, below, neatly summarizes the necessary components of your research paper: “Introductions, Body Paragraphs, and Conclusions for an Argument Paper.” (Note: A “Rebuttal Section” may or may not be necessary.) https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/paragraphs_and_paragraphing/index.html

ASSIGNMENT 6 SUMMARY

Call or e-mail your Thesis Director about the progress that you are making on the **Body**. *Send in each chapter as you complete it. Your Thesis Director may request sample writings from you.*

3. C. 7. Assignment 7: Writing the Paper: Introduction

For more background to this assignment, see Turabian, Part I, Section 10.

The **Introduction** succinctly states your **thesis** and the purpose for it in 1-2 pages. Here, you are telling the reader (1) your position, i.e., your thesis statement; (2) the context and parameters of your argument; (3) why this is a compelling topic. Feel free to modify the thesis statement you originally submitted, but don’t neglect to include the basic elements of the thesis as given in Assignment 1. If you must alter in any way the title given in your Thesis Proposal, you must seek approval for that alteration of the Academic Dean.

Your thesis statement *normally* appears in the first or second paragraph, although sometimes this is delayed to later on in the Introduction, for effect.

ASSIGNMENT 7 SUMMARY

Submit your 1-2-page **Introduction** to your Thesis Director.

3. C. 8. Assignment 8: Writing the Paper: Conclusion

For more background to this assignment, see Turabian, Part I, Section 10.

The **Conclusion** is your 1-2-page wrap-up, summary, restatement of thesis and pithy statements about the cogency of your position, as well as a possible future direction or wider appeal and/or use.

ASSIGNMENT 8 SUMMARY

Call or e-mail your Thesis Director about the progress that you are making on your **Conclusion**. *It may be helpful to send your director sample writings. Your Director may request sample writings from you.*

3. C. 9. Assignment 9: Writing the Paper: Abstract

The **Abstract** is a 1-2 *paragraph* summary of your thesis statement, the main argument and your conclusion. It is a challenge to be clear and to the point, but that is your goal, as the abstract needs to be understandable to a wide audience. The abstract serves to whet the reader's appetite to read the entire thesis. The abstract type you will write is called an "informational abstract."

The following page on the *Purdue Owl* nicely summarizes the task of, and approach to, an abstract: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/graduate_writing/graduate_writing_genres/graduate_writing_genres_abstracts_new.html

ASSIGNMENT 9 SUMMARY

Work on your own to write the **Abstract** that will be included in the final form of your thesis paper. Consult with your Thesis Director as needed.

3. C. 10. Assignment 10: Writing the Paper: Footnotes and Bibliography

For more background to this assignment, see Turabian, Part II, Sections 15-17.

Make sure your **Footnotes** are in the proper Turabian format. Remember to cite not only direct quotations but any idea that is not your own. Your paper should have a large number of footnotes. It is not unusual in scholarly papers for almost every sentence to be footnoted.

The **Bibliography** should list only the sources you actually used to write your paper. This would consist of any source that is referenced. You may, however, add a secondary bibliography of sources consulted, but not used, in the writing of the thesis. If so, title this either "Supplemental Bibliography" or "Additional Sources."

ASSIGNMENT 10 SUMMARY

Work on your own to review your **Footnotes** and **Bibliography**. Consult with your Thesis Director as needed.

3. C. 11. Assignment 11: Writing the Paper: The First Draft

For more background to this assignment, see Turabian, Part I, Section 11 and Part II, Sections 20-26 and Appendices A1-3.

What makes a paper good? **Proofreading, draft writing, rewriting, editing, and rewriting.** It is always a good idea to read your paper aloud, because you can catch punctuation, grammatical errors and convoluted phrasing more easily. Especially watch for run-on sentences and sentence fragments. **If, by the time you finish a sentence, you do not remember what the beginning is about, the reader will not remember, either. If the same thing happens with a paragraph, rewrite it. It may be that you need to divide it into two paragraphs, shorten it, or even make it longer.** Consult Turabian on all aspects of punctuation, especially use of quotation marks in block quotes, grammar, etc., where you are not sure.

ASSIGNMENT 11 SUMMARY

Submit your first full draft of the thesis in the correct format, according to the directives found in the “Requirements” section of this document, under “Submission Deadline” and using Turabian, Appendices A1-3. This draft should go to your Thesis Director and, with his or her approval will eventually go to your Readers and to the M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Coordinator. Drafts to the Thesis Director should be submitted with sufficient time for the Director to require, and for you to make, revisions before a **Director-Approved Draft** is sent to Readers. The Director-Approved Draft to Readers should be submitted with sufficient time for them to require, and approve, revisions before the mid-April deadline for a spring defense, and before the mid-November deadline for a fall defense (see *SJS Academic Catalogue* for particular date), if you plan to graduate. Note that the members of your Thesis Board may not all have comments on, or revisions to, the draft.

3. C. 12. Assignment 12: Writing Your Paper: Revising and Turning in a Final Draft

For more background to this assignment, see Turabian, Part I, Section 12.

1. **Revise** your thesis according to any comments that you receive from your Director and Readers. Pay special attention to formatting, grammar, and stylistic issues both for text, i.e., chapter and section headings, block quotes, etc., and for footnotes and bibliography entries. Give careful thought to theoretical issues that may be mentioned concerning your argument by your Director and/or Readers as they are likely to be raised during the defense.
2. **Notify Directors and Readers of Deadlines.** Directors and Readers have multiple responsibilities in addition to supervising theses. Care should be taken to notify

Directors and Readers regarding Submission Deadlines and when they are likely to receive from you drafts requiring their attention given those deadlines. If possible, solicit from them information about times when they are unavailable to consult, read or offer revisions regarding your thesis.

3. **Submission Deadline.** In order to graduate in December or May of a given year, a student must have completed and submitted a **Defense-Ready Thesis, approved by the Director and Readers, by the dates specified on the SJS Academic Calendar for that year.** A student planning to graduate in December must have submitted by the mid-November date for that year specified on the Calendar; a student planning to graduate in May of a given year must submit by the mid-April date specified.
4. **Thesis Defense:** Having submitted a Defense-Ready Thesis, approved by the Director and Readers, to the SJS M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Coordinator, the student, Director, and Readers will be contacted by the Coordinator about setting up a date for the Thesis Defense (see **M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Defense Document**).

ASSIGNMENT 12 SUMMARY

- A Defense-Ready Thesis includes all revisions in substance and style recommended by the Director, Readers, and the M.A./M.T.S. Coordinator in compliance with the Fall and Spring deadlines indicated in the SJS Academic Calendar for the year.
- Consult early in the process regarding availability of Director and Readers to receive and recommend revisions to drafts.
- Notify the Director and Readers about time periods in which they are likely to receive drafts and deadlines regarding them.

CONGRATULATIONS! YOU HAVE WRITTEN A SCHOLARLY MASTER’S THESIS!

See “Presentation and Defense of Master of Arts or Master of Theological Studies Thesis,” below in this *Handbook*, for instructions regarding your Defense and Submitting your finalized M.A./M.T.S. Thesis to the M.A./M.T.S. Coordinator and the Academic Dean’s Office.

Chapter 4

Defense Protocol and Publishing Guidelines

4. A. Format for Presentation of M.A./M.T.S. Thesis and Defense Protocol

Two hours in length

1. The Master's Defense is a public event sponsored by St. John's Seminary for the purpose of awarding Master of Arts in Theology and Master of Theological Studies degrees to students who have completed the required course of study and written a defensible thesis on a subject of theological importance.
2. The Master's Candidate and the members of the Candidate's Thesis Committee—the Thesis Director and, usually, two Readers—are essential members of the defense. Other members of St. John's Seminary community are invited and encouraged to attend. Members of the broader community are welcome. Candidates are encouraged to invite family and members of their respective communities and to make the Thesis Director, Readers, and the M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Coordinator aware of whom to expect on the day of the defense, particularly persons of rank such as bishops, rectors, teachers, etc.
3. The Candidate's Thesis Director will chair the defense session, introduce the Candidate and members of the Committee and welcome guests on behalf of the Seminary. The Director will briefly describe the defense process and will monitor each stage in order that there is sufficient time for evaluation by the Thesis Committee.
4. The Master's Candidate will have fifteen minutes to present the thesis (15 mins). Candidates who expect to use Power-Point presentation or other media-based support will notify the M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Coordinator prior to the day of the defense.
5. The Thesis Director and each Reader will have ten to fifteen minutes for questioning the Candidate on the matter of the thesis (40-60 mins). Candidates who expect that one or more Committee members will join the defense remotely will notify the Director and the M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Coordinator prior to the day of the defense.
6. Time will be given for general questioning of the Candidate by Committee members and/or other attendees on the matter of the thesis (15 mins).
7. The Thesis Committee will then withdraw from the place of the defense (see d. below). The Committee will evaluate the Candidate's presentation of the thesis and its defense. The Candidate's Thesis Director will chair the evaluation session (30 mins).
 - a. The Thesis Committee will provide a grade (A, A-, B+, B), which assesses both the thesis paper and the defense. In the event of disagreement regarding the grade, the Director, as Chair, will resolve the matter.

- b. The Committee may reject the thesis and its presentation.
 - c. The Committee may make the grade dependent upon the subsequent rewriting of sections of the thesis or upon subsequent corrections to the thesis by the Candidate.
 - d. At St. John's Seminary, as a rule, the Thesis Defense is held in person. Students must make reasonable scheduling and travel arrangements to be present at a time suitable to the members of the Thesis Committee. In the extraordinary event that the defense is not held in person, e.g., via electronically supported platform such as Zoom, Canvas, etc., provision will be made for the Thesis Director and the Readers to consult privately regarding the grade and their evaluation of the thesis and its defense.
8. The Thesis Committee will return to the place of the defense and the Candidate's Thesis Director will communicate the results of the evaluation privately to the Candidate. The Director will also announce the outcome of the defense.
 9. The Candidate's Thesis Director will obtain a paper copy of the *SJS M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Grade Sheet* from the Registrar's Office and submit the completed grade sheet for the thesis Defense to the Registrar's Office.
 10. The Candidate's Thesis Director will obtain two paper copies of the Signature Page from the M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Coordinator for signing on the day of the defense. The Director will affix his or her own signature, and obtain the signatures of Reader(s), and will submit two signed, paper copies of the signature page, one copy to the Registrar's Office for the student's file, and another to the M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Coordinator for binding.
 11. The Candidate will submit a PDF of the final version of the thesis to the Academic Dean's Office and to the M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Coordinator.
 12. The Candidate will submit a printed copy of the thesis to the Dean's Office, including the Signature Page signed by the Director and Readers.

Notes for the New Master

- Congratulations on the successful defense of your thesis.
- The thesis requirement for the Master of Arts in Theology or the Master of Theological Studies will be considered fulfilled only when the Candidate shall have submitted one final hard copy of the thesis to the Academic Dean and one electronic copy for the Archives of the Seminary. All submitted copies must conform in detail to the *SJS M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Publishing Guidelines* document. Failure to do so could result in a rejection of the submitted copy(ies).

4. B. M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Publishing Guidelines

All citations must appear in *Chicago Manual of Style* or *Kate L. Turabian* form.*

Footnotes are required.

- Single space each footnote. In the case of more than one footnote on a page, insert a blank line between each footnote.
- Where one author has several publications, use a shortened form of the reference, e.g., author's last name & page number, or author's last name, shortened form of the title, and page number. Current practice is to avoid using "Ibid" entirely. If "Ibid." is used, do so only where the source is the same as the one immediately preceding it on the page. Avoid using "Ibid." as the first footnote, or as the only footnote, on a page.
- Numbering footnotes: begin the Introduction, each Chapter, and the Conclusion with footnote 1 where document exceeds 100 footnotes. "Number notes consecutively, beginning with 1. If your paper has separate chapters, restart each chapter with note 1. Do not skip a number or use numbers such as 5a. (Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, Ninth Edition, 16.3.3).

Acceptable Fonts: Times New Roman and Garamond. **Use one font throughout the document including front matter, footnotes, appendices, bibliography, etc.**

Text printed in 12 point type.

Style elements should be consistent throughout the manuscript.

Margins: left hand, top, bottom and right hand, 1 inch.

Text: Double spaced

Numbering of pages:

- **Front matter** must include a Title Page, Signature Page, an Abstract Page and Table of Contents. It may include Acknowledgments and other credits, as well as a List of Abbreviations. Page numbers should not be printed on the Title Page or the Signature Page. Page numbers in lower case Roman numerals should be printed on other front matter at the bottom, center of the page for all pages with a centered title (Introduction, Acknowledgements, TOC, etc.). See **Chapter 4. B. 1-2. Sample pages, Title Page, Signature Page and Table of Contents.**

*See Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 9th ed. (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2018).

October 2025 version

- **Pages in the body of the text and back matter, beginning with the Introduction and including the Bibliography**, should be numbered consecutively starting with Arabic numeral 1. Page numbers should appear at the bottom, right of page except for pages with centered headings, i.e., Chapter headings, Bibliography, Appendices, etc., on which page numbers appear at bottom, center. (Turabian, A.1.4.2).

Paper size: 8.5 inches by 11 inches

Single-sided printing

Paper composition: plain white, acid free paper, minimum of 20-pound bond, minimum 25 percent cotton rag or fiber content. See packaging of paper for this information.

4. B. 1. Sample Title Page

SEMINARIUM SANCTI JOANNIS BOSTONIENSE

Place title here (Capitalize only the first letter of relevant words)

A THESIS

Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Theology

At St. John's Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree

Master of [Arts in Theology/of Theological Studies]

©

Copyright

All Rights Reserved

By

(Author's Name of Record)

Boston, Massachusetts

(Year)

4. B. 2. Sample Signature Page*

This thesis by (author's name of record) fulfills the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts in Theology, and is approved by (name of Director, Degree), as Director, and by (name of Readers, Degrees) as Readers.

[This thesis . . . fulfills the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Theological Studies, and is approved by . . .]

(Name, Degree of Director), Director

(Name, Degree of Reader), Reader

(Name, degree of Reader), Reader

**On the day of the defense, one signed copy of this document is to be delivered by the Thesis Director to the Registrar for the Candidate's file. A second signed copy of this document is to be delivered to the M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Coordinator to be inserted into the printed copy of the thesis for binding. The Coordinator will provide the Candidate with an electronic signed page to include in the PDF version of the thesis.*

The Candidate will email a PDF version of the thesis, including the signature page, to the Academic Dean's Office and to the M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Coordinator for binding.

The Candidate will deliver a printed copy of the thesis to the Academic Dean's Office.



4. B. 3. M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Defense Documents Checklist for Day of Defense

_____ Grade Sheet

Unsigned Grade Sheet is provided by Registrar to Director on day of defense.

Signed grade sheet is returned by Thesis Director to Registrar on the day of the defense

_____ Thesis Signature Page (4.B.2.)

Unsigned Signature Page is provide by Coordinator to Thesis Director on day of defense (2 copies)/

Thesis Director and Reader(s) **sign both copies on day of defense.**

- Copy 1: Director to Registrar for candidate's file
- Copy 2: Director to M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Coordinator for binding

Thesis Coordinator will provide candidate with electronic signed page to include in PDF version of thesis.

_____ PDF final version of thesis:

Candidate to Academic Dean's Office

Candidate to M.A./M.T.S. thesis Coordinator for binding

_____ Printed Thesis:

Candidate to Academic Dean's Office



Chapter 5

SJS Leave of Absence Policy for the Master of Arts, Master of Arts in Ministry, and Master of Theological Studies

A leave of absence is a period during which a matriculated (i.e., enrolled in a degree program) student is not actually enrolled in any degree requirement such as courses, field education or thesis guidance during the course of an academic year. To maintain status as a degree candidate, all seminarians or students in the Master of Arts, Master of Arts in Ministry and the Master of Theological Studies degree programs must be enrolled continuously each fall and spring term until graduation* unless the student petitions the Director of Intellectual Formation/Academic Dean and is granted a leave of absence. A seminarian or student may petition for a leave of up to two semesters at a time. Should a student's circumstances be grave and require additional leave beyond the two semesters, one must re-petition for an extension. Only under grave circumstance will such an extension be granted.

Tuition is not charged in any semester where a student has been granted leave for the full semester. When a student petitions for a leave after the start of a semester, tuition is refunded according to the refund schedule provided in the *Saint John's Seminary Catalogue*.

A seminarian or student seeking to obtain permission for a leave of absence is encouraged to speak first with his or her degree program advisor. To petition, the student must contact Maureen DeBernardi, SJS Registrar, at Maureen.DeBernardi@sjs.edu, to obtain the *SJS Leave of Absence Form*. Once the Form is submitted to the Registrar, the student will be notified of the Seminary's response to the petition.

*The M.A.M./M.T.S. Summer Session is not counted and can be ignored for these purposes.

5. A. M.A./M.T.S. Leave of Absence Form



SAINT JOHN'S
SEMINARY

**Saint John's Seminary
Leave of Absence Request**

Name: _____ Date: _____

Program: _____

Advisor: _____

Academic Year of Leave: _____ Term(s) of Leave: _____

Reason for requesting a Leave of Absence:

Student's Signature

Thesis Director's Signature

Academic Dean's Signature

Date

This completed form must be submitted to the SJS Registrar, maureen.debernardi@sjs.edu, to be maintained as part of the student record.

Please Note:

To maintain status as a thesis candidate, all seminarians or students in the Master of Arts or the Master of Theological Studies degree programs must be enrolled continuously each fall and spring term* until graduation unless the student petitions the Director of Intellectual Formation/Academic Dean and is granted a leave of absence. A seminarian or student may petition for a leave of up to two semesters at a time. Should the student's circumstances be grave and require additional leave beyond the two semesters, he or she must re-petition for an extension. Only under grave circumstances will such an extension be granted.

Tuition is not charged in any semester where a student has been granted leave for the full semester. When a student petitions for a leave after the start of a semester, tuition is refunded according to the refund schedule provided in the *Saint John's Seminary Catalogue*.

*The M.A./M.T.S. Summer Session is not counted and can be ignored for these purposes.

5. B. M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Continuation Form



**SAINT JOHN'S
SEMINARY**

**Saint John's Seminary
Continuation for M.A.(T) or M.T.S. Thesis Direction**

Name: _____

Date: _____

Thesis Director: _____

Academic Year: _____

Academic Term (Spring or Fall): _____

Continuation for M.A. or M.T.S. Thesis Direction incurs a \$675 fee per semester if the student is not otherwise actively enrolled in credit courses. The student must submit a Continuation for M.A. or M.T.S. Thesis Direction form for each term (or petition the Academic Dean for a leave of absence, otherwise the student will be presumed to have withdrawn from the M.A. or M.T.S. Program.

Student's Signature

Thesis Advisor's Signature

Academic Dean's Signature

Date

Appendix A:
2025-2026 SJS M.A./M.T.S. Faculty & Staff Contacts

Janet Benestad, Ph.D., Philosophy, M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Coordinator, jbenestad@sjs.edu.

Rev. Joseph Briody, S.T.D., Coordinator of Spiritual Formation and Professor of Sacred Scripture, joseph.briody@sjs.edu.

Maureen DeBernardi, Director of Admissions/Registrar, maureen.debernardi@sjs.edu.

Paul Metilly, Ph.D., Director of Intellectual Formation/Academic Dean, paul.metilly@sjs.edu

Ellen Oesterle, Administrator of the Theological Institute, ellen.oesterle@sjs.edu

M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Board Members:

Paul Metilly, Ph.D., Academic Dean, paul.metilly@sjs.edu

Rev. Joseph Briody, S.T.D., Professor of Sacred Scripture, joseph.briody@sjs.edu

Janet Benestad, Ph.D., Philosophy, jbenestad@sjs.edu

Appendix B
2025-2026 M.A./M.T.S. Thesis Deadlines

Deadlines for Submission of Defense-Ready Draft:

Wednesday, November 12, 2025, for December graduation.

Monday, April 13, 2026, for May graduation.