

Thesis Project

Deadline Checklist (for all students; students may work ahead of deadlines, but these are final dates in the thesis timeline)

- Attend the Thesis Proposal Workshop
- 2 months** after workshop: formal approval of the thesis project proposal by thesis advisor and second reader
- Prior to or by November 1** of intended graduation year: First three chapters, title page, table of contents and bibliography due for review by thesis advisor and technical reader
- Between November 1 and January 15:** Provide thesis advisor with chapter-by-chapter submission of thesis work for review. Students should receive general approval of their work from the thesis advisor prior to the February 1 submission deadline.

The above items can be completed any time *prior to* the listed dates.

- January 15** of intended graduation year: Final copy of thesis due to student's thesis advisor. Submitting to the broader committee on February 1 will not be permitted unless this January 15th deadline is met. If a thesis advisor does not feel the document is ready for final review by the technical reader and the Thesis Examining Committee, the student's thesis advisor may notify the D.Min. office that the student is not ready to proceed through the graduation cycle this year.
- February 1** of intended graduation year: Final copy due for review by thesis advisor, second reader, technical reader, research design reader, and D.Min. office
- Mid/Late February** (TBD each year) of intended graduation year: Oral defense of thesis with the Thesis Examining Committee

If the final copy of the thesis project or the oral defense is not satisfactory, the program director reserves the right to remove the student's name from the graduation list until the following year.

- March 1** of intended graduation year: Readers will return final copy of thesis project to student with mandatory corrections to be made
- April 1** of intended graduation year: final thesis project due to thesis advisor and library reader with ALL corrections made for technical examination
- May 1**, send the Thesis Executive Summary to program coordinator by e-mail for the colloquium and distribution to other graduates; send the completed thesis project to thesis advisor for a final grade
- May 15** of intended graduation year: Three corrected hard copies of thesis due to program coordinator, ready for library binding
- Day prior to graduation: Thesis Project Colloquium

The above deadlines should be taken VERY seriously by students. Failure to meet these deadlines may result in a student having to wait to graduate the following year.

The culminating phase of the Doctor of Ministry program is the development, implementation and report of the thesis project. This project provides the opportunity for D.Min. candidates to draw together in one focused undertaking the skills, insights and understanding derived from the several components of the program. **It is a major undertaking with a general expectation of the investment of at least 300 hours and a resultant report of at least 150 pages.**

The thesis project report is to be written in third person and should follow the writing guidelines in this manual. **Turabian is the default guide if you cannot find a particular answer regarding writing guidelines in this manual.**

Although the thesis project differs from a Ph.D. thesis, it requires similar rigorous investigation, clarity and coherence of thought and quality of writing. It differs primarily in its focus on the practice of ministry, in its use of research materials appropriate to the focus and in its insistence on integration of ministry practice with the candidate's own theological understandings of ministry.

Thesis Expectations

It is important for Doctor of Ministry students to be fully aware that admission into the program does not in any way guarantee graduation from the program with the Doctor of Ministry degree. Because the thesis project is the culmination of the Doctor of Ministry program, it is possible for a student to successfully complete all classes in the program and still not graduate with the Doctor of Ministry degree due to an incomplete or unsatisfactory performance in the final thesis research and writing. Successful graduation from the program requires that students complete an acceptable, doctoral-level research project as described in the Integral Research and Writing course, the Thesis Proposal Workshop, and the student manual. Some students may not be able to finish the thesis process after completing all required course work and obtaining an approved thesis proposal. In these cases, a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies will be granted to these students in order to recognize the hard work they've put into the program even though they were unable to complete the journey.

Special Note: Students should note that attendance at Commencement does not equal official Graduation from the program; the Registrar's Office is responsible for granting the Doctor of Ministry degree to students after all requirements of the program and university are met.

The three most common problems students face when struggling to complete the research project are:

1. Failure to grasp the conceptual framework for how to engage in doctoral research.
2. A project that lacks clear focus.
3. Inability to adequately communicate their thinking in writing.
4. Failure to conduct any actual field research such as data gathering, data assessment, and interpretation of the data, which is the foundation of doctoral research.

It is vital that students who discover that they struggle in any of these areas seek immediate help from their thesis advisor, who can direct them to the resources necessary to overcome these struggles. It is also important that students maintain strict adherence to the Thesis Project Checklist and all deadlines to avoid any last minute problems with their research project.

There are five phases to the thesis process:

- Development of a thesis project proposal
- Implementation of the thesis project
- Writing and submission of the thesis project report to thesis readers
- Oral defense of the thesis project to the thesis examining committee
- Completion of all required revisions noted by the thesis readers

Thesis Readers

There are various readers that review the thesis project during the approval process. The thesis readers include: thesis advisor (chair), second reader, technical reader, faculty reader, research design reader, and library reader who will review the thesis project before binding.

Special Note: *Students are to communicate directly with the thesis advisor on matters pertaining to the thesis. Students should not engage other readers in conversations about thesis work without coordinating this with the thesis advisor. This policy is to insure that students are hearing a unified voice on matters of thesis requirements, and helps to insure that students are not engaging in triangulated communication.*

Thesis Advisor

A thesis advisor is assigned after completion of the Thesis Proposal Workshop, based on the topic or request by the student. The thesis advisor (TA) is the main reader of the thesis and the one who is *primarily* responsible for approving the thesis in its final form and grading the final thesis project. The TA shall read the thesis for form and style, content, and research methodology. Of special importance is ensuring that the student has adequately rooted their study in a biblical and theological context, has undertaken a thorough search of the literature related to their research topic and articulated the role their thesis serves in light of the literature search, as well as ensuring that adequate research methods have been utilized in gathering data and that subsequently there is a cogent analysis and interpretation of the data. The TA is responsible for funneling comments from all other readers to the student in a responsible and timely manner and ensuring that edits are made consistent with those comments. The TA serves as a member of the Thesis Examining Committee.

Second Reader

The thesis advisor is responsible to select a second reader for each thesis project and to notify the program coordinator of the selection. The second reader (SR) is to primarily serve the TA as an objective, second pair of eyes. The SR should also read for form and style, content, and research methodology. Of special importance is ensuring that the student has adequately rooted their study in a biblical and theological context, has undertaken a thorough search of the literature related to their research topic and articulated the role their thesis serves in light of the literature search, as well as ensuring that adequate research methods have been utilized in gathering data and that subsequently there is a cogent analysis and interpretation of the data. The SR's comments should be written up in detail and provided directly to the TA for communication to the student. At NO TIME should the SR directly communicate with the Student regarding the thesis. The only exception to this should be when the TA requests communication between the SR and the Student for a specific reason (e.g., the SR possessing expertise in a particular research method or with particular data analysis software that may help to strengthen the Student's work.) Again, this communication should only happen at the request of the TA.

Technical Reader

The technical reader has been selected by the Doctor of Ministry office. The technical reader (TR) has primary responsibility for reading the thesis to ensure it adheres to all form and style requirements as outlined in the Student Manual. The TR should give special attention to whether or not the overall writing style is consistent with doctoral level writing and that the thesis is also consistent with grammatical conventions. The TR will pass all comments to both the student and the TA so that the TA can then interact with the student regarding the TR's comments and ensure that they are addressed. Other than the written report, the TR should not communicate directly with the student, but rather direct all follow-up communication through the TA to ensure a consistent message is communicated to the student.

Faculty Reader

The faculty reader is a member of Bethel Seminary's faculty who is also a member of the Faculty Doctor of Ministry Committee (FDMAC). The faculty reader (FR) is primarily responsible for examining the quality of the thesis in terms of its subject domain. This includes an evaluation of the biblical-theological treatment, engagement with the literature of the field, and overall study findings. The FR serves as a member of the Thesis Examining Committee.

Research Design Reader

The research design reader has been selected by the Doctor of Ministry office. The research design reader (RDR) has primary responsibility for examining the quality of research reported in the thesis. Of special concern is ensuring that an acceptable research design has been undertaken, that data have been adequately collected, and that appropriate analysis and interpretation of the data has been conducted so as to result in acceptable findings for a doctoral level research project. The RDR should provide a report to the TA that will then be communicated directly with the student. The RDR will indicate whether the level of research is a: **Pass** (no significant comments needed), **Pass with Comments**, (some revision necessary) **Conditional Pass** (significant revisions necessary), or **Document is Not Passable at this Time** (substantial revisions necessary). The RDR serves as a member of the Thesis Examining Committee.

Library Reader

The library reader has been selected by the Doctor of Ministry office. The library reader (LR) is responsible for ensuring that the thesis meets the necessary conventions of style, form, grammar, binding requirements, and final placement within the library. The LR will evaluate the thesis to ensure that the student has implemented all of the required changes requested by the technical reader, and provide a technical review of the thesis in collaboration with the TA. The LR will provide the student with a written report articulating necessary changes to be made for acceptance of the final thesis project as complete and approved. The TA assigns a grade after this final technical reading, once the thesis is in its completed form.

D.Min. Director

The program director (PD) is the primary arbiter when various readers express concerns regarding the quality of a thesis. When a thesis' quality is called into question and is in jeopardy of not being approved, the PD will coordinate communication between the various readers and the thesis advisor to bring the issue to resolution. The PD serves as a member of the Thesis Examining Committee.

Thesis Examining Committee

The acceptability of the student's work is determined by an examining committee made up of the thesis advisor, research design reader, faculty reader, and the D.Min. director. The thesis examining committee will evaluate the student's work during an oral defense and determine the student's readiness for moving toward commencement and graduation from the program. The director reserves the right to terminate a student from the D.Min. program due to failure to complete a quality thesis project after several corrections, and at the recommendation of the thesis examining committee and the Faculty Doctor of Ministry Committee (FDMAC).

Thesis Proposal Workshop

Each student will participate in the Thesis Proposal Workshop (GS803) in preparation for the implementation of the thesis project. The course must be either the final or next to final course in the student's program.

Upon completion of the workshop, a thesis proposal will be submitted to the workshop instructor for a course grade. The instructor will inform the student's thesis advisor of the status of the proposal and the thesis advisor will assume advisement of the thesis project proposal process. A second reader will be assigned as well. The goal of the workshop is the development of a workable thesis project concept and the writing of a thesis project proposal consistent with program guidelines. To achieve that goal some preparatory work is essential. In preparation for the course, we recommend that students obtain current editions of the following books:

Leedy, Paul, Ormrod, Jeanne Ellis. *Practical Research: Planning and Design*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Vyhmeister, Nancy Jean. *Quality Research Papers*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

William Myers, *Research in Ministry: A Primer for the Doctor of Ministry Program*. Chicago: Exploration Press. [A PDF copy of this is available to you through the D.Min. office for a charge of \$5 for the copyright fee]

John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Students are requested to study carefully parts one and two of Leedy (chapters one through six). These sections focus on the basic issues and procedures in designing a project and writing a proposal. When the student has a good grasp of this material and has some idea about the project focus, the student should browse the remainder of the book to gain a general idea of the subject matter.

Following the student's completion of the Thesis Proposal Workshop, the instructor will forward the latest draft of the student's proposal to the thesis advisor with an enclosed letter reflecting his perceptions concerning both the student and the forwarded proposal. In some cases only modest revision/addition is necessary for the proposal to be acceptable for approval. In other cases significant work may remain before approval can occur. It is recognized, however, that the addition of two other perspectives (thesis advisor/second reader) may raise appropriate issues which have not come to the attention of the workshop instructor. Students are apprised of this and understand that the thesis advisor may request modification concerning issues which have not been raised with them in the workshop. Those issues should not, however, represent a departure from the proposal format detailed in the following material.

Proposal Development

The length of the thesis project proposal should be approximately **20-30 pages, double-spaced**, not including bibliography or research instruments. The thesis project proposal is to be written in third person.

The development of the thesis project proposal should follow the ensuring guidelines that are drawn with some modification from Leedy, part two (chapters three through six). The student should refer to Leedy for description of the terms used in the guidelines. This initial draft of the thesis project proposal will be significantly reshaped during the Thesis Proposal Workshop. The student should bring the proposal to the workshop electronically. If at all possible, the student should also bring a laptop computer.

Expectations for Thesis Project Proposals

The following material presents guidelines concerning expectations for thesis project proposals in Bethel Seminary's Doctor of Ministry program. By distributing this document to both students who are writing the proposals and thesis advisors who are reading and approving them, it is hoped that greater consistency in expectations will be achieved. When approved, the thesis project proposal should be viewed as a contract between the student and the thesis advisor/second reader for the work to be done in implementing the thesis project.

Proposal Outline

TITLE

A clear, concise statement communicating the focus of the project.

SECTION I – THE PROBLEM AND ITS CONTEXT

The Problem

The heart of this section is two sentences. The first sentence will complete the thought, "The problem this project will address is ..." The second sentence will complete the thought, "In the response to this problem, this project will ..." The second may offer a brief amplification of one or both sentences, but the heart of the section is a clear statement of a problem and the choice of an appropriate response. It should be recognized that there are numerous possible responses to any problem, and the second sentence identifies the one which this project intends.

Definition of Terms

These are operational definitions of key concepts used in the project. While they should bear a definite relationship to commonly understood meanings of the terms used (black should not be defined as white), they are not confined to dictionary definitions. It is understood that wherever the terms are used, they mean what is stated in the operational definitions.

Delimitations

Delimitations are intended to indicate what issues logically related to the problem and its response will not be addressed in the project. Delimitations may be stated for geography or

numbers or organizational scope, but the more important task is to anticipate and answer the logical questions which might be asked about the project's focus.

Assumptions

Assumptions are primary concepts which must be accepted as true in order for the project to be implemented. They may relate to the project's context or to its theoretical base. They differ from hypotheses in that hypotheses are ideas that are being explored in the doing of the project.

Subproblems/Hypotheses

Subproblems are the logical components of the problem response as a whole. They may be written either as a series of statements or as a series of questions. In either case, they represent the logical steps of work which must be taken in order that the entire problem response be completed. Each proposal must include one subproblem that addresses biblical/theological issues and one that addresses issue to be explored through other related literature. Other subproblems usually include field research, program or model development and implementation/evaluation. In some cases where implementation/evaluation components are not appropriate or feasible, the terminal point of the project may be a decision point concerning the program/model which has been evaluated by means other than implementation and evaluation.

Hypotheses in this type of qualitative research are not required or formally tested. Instead, they represent informed hunches concerning what the student expects to discover in addressing a particular subproblem. Their articulation serves to alert both the student and the thesis advisor/second reader to existing biases on the part of the student. Any hypotheses which are stated should follow the statement of the subproblem to which they are related.

Setting of the Project

This section should contain a description of the context or contexts in which the project will be carried out and to which it applies. While a general description of the context(s) is appropriate, the primary focus should be on the particular characteristics of the setting(s) which make the project significant.

Importance of the Project

There are three sub-sections in this part of the proposal:

1. The first explains why the project is important to the researcher as a person. It is appropriate here to draw upon personal experiences to explain the importance of the project focus to the student.
2. The second sub-section indicates the importance of the project in terms of the contribution it will make to the student's immediate ministry context. Here it is appropriate for the student to talk about his/her current ministry roles and responsibilities.
3. The third sub-section explores how the project will contribute to the broader social and ministry context and how the project will contribute to the wider academic community. Care should be taken that there is no claim that results in the particular

context in which the project is implemented can be replicated elsewhere. At best, in this type of research project, findings can serve to suggest models or examples which may be contextualized to other settings.

SECTION II – THEOLOGY

This section is used to expand the biblical/theological subproblem by identifying the questions and/or issues which will be explored in developing a biblical/theological basis for the project. It is not a place for the student to expound theological convictions—these may be articulated as hypotheses following the earlier statement of this subproblem. It represents the writing of a contract indicating the issues/questions which will focus the biblical/theological study of the project itself. It is expected that the listing of questions/issues is preliminary. The study itself will in most cases generate more questions/issues. However, by looking at this section and the proposal's preliminary bibliography, the Thesis advisor/second reader should be able to determine whether the student is “on the right track” both in terms of issues and in terms of resources.

SECTION III – REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

This section expands another of the subproblems by identifying the areas of knowledge other than biblical/theological that must be examined to develop an adequate theoretical base for the project. It parallels the previous section in that the heart of it is the identification of the issues/questions which must be addressed in implementing the project, but additionally it must identify the disciplines from which appropriate literature will be drawn. Again, by looking at this section and the bibliography, the thesis advisor/second reader should be able to tell whether the student is getting to the right sources with the right questions. Questions relating to social research methodology **should not** be included in this section.

SECTION IV – DATA AND METHODOLOGY

In this section, the student should cover the remaining subproblems of the project. Following three preliminary sections, each subproblem will be addressed by the use of a series of identical questions.

Nature of the Research – The section should begin with an identification by the student of the basic integral research approach and the student's unique research path (qualitative/quantitative or a combination), the model being used (frequently case study), the kinds of research being done (historical/descriptive/field/action, grounded theory, biographical, etc.), and the specific methods being employed (questionnaire/interview, etc.).

Data – This section is to be used by the student to identify both the secondary data and the primary data which will be employed or generated in doing the project. **Secondary data** consist of anything created by others but used in the implementation of the project (books, periodical articles, internet materials, church or denominational documents, etc., etc.). **Primary data** are all materials created by the student in the process of implementing the project (letters, questionnaires, questionnaire responses, programs, models, evaluative tools,

etc., etc.). Both secondary and primary data are simply to be listed under the appropriate category without discussion or reference to ways they are secured/produced or used.

Project Overview – This section is to be a narrative summary of the student’s plan for the project. It should begin with a description of the intended theoretical work and continue with the description of any field research, model or program development, implementation, and evaluation to the project’s termination point. Generally, it will follow the sequence of the subproblems, but since often the subproblem work is concurrent rather than sequential, the description is frequently a combination of logical and chronological sequencing. It appears at this point to give the thesis advisor/second reader a view of the “forest” before looking at the “trees” in the section on subproblem treatment. In developing the proposal, the student writes this section following completion of the work on subproblem treatment.

Subproblem Treatment – In this section the student is to restate each subproblem and under it write a response to the following questions:

- What data are needed to address subproblem?
- What criteria will be used to determine acceptability of the data?
- Where are the data located?
- How will the data be secured?
- For what purpose and in what ways(s) will the data be used?

The responses are to be brief, direct, and descriptive—and are to remain focused solely on the question to which they represent a response. Usually there will be a pattern of responses under the subproblems which focus on the theoretical work and a different pattern under field research, model/program development, implementation/evaluation or decision-making. Under some of the later subproblems, data to be used have been secured under the work of earlier subproblems and are in the student’s possession. In such cases, responses to the question may simply refer to the appropriate earlier subproblem work.

SECTION V – PROPOSED THESIS REPORT OUTLINED

The student will have followed a model for the proposed outline which is distributed and discussed in the Thesis Proposal Workshop and is contained in the student and advisor manuals. However, the generic headings of the model should be replaced by chapter headings and even subheadings which are project specific—are reflective of the focus and concerns of the particular project.

SECTION VI – TENTATIVE SCHEDULE FOR COMPLETION

This section is to present a tentative schedule for planning and implementation of the project as well as for the writing of the thesis project report. These two elements will be interwoven since the writing process will usually begin prior to completion of the activity of the project. The schedule should begin with a proposed date for approval of the project proposal and should conclude with the date of intended graduation.

SECTION VII – PRELIMINARY BIBLIOGRAPHY

The preliminary bibliography should run approximately three to five pages. It is preliminary in the sense that it is assumed the student will discover additional resources in the course of his/her work. The basic criteria for the preliminary bibliography are that it covers all areas necessary to the completion of the project and that the sources listed represent the quality of resource for that area which is acceptable for doctoral level work. An example of this would be that biblical commentaries cited be exegetical in nature rather than homiletical or devotional.

Thesis Proposal Approval

- It is the student's responsibility to submit all materials to both the thesis advisor and second reader (selected by the thesis advisor).
 - The thesis advisor is not responsible for sending materials to the second reader on the student's behalf (though please follow the guidance of your thesis advisor on this point).
 - The thesis advisor and second reader will review the proposal, suggest revisions and formally approve the proposal. Such approval will be signified by submission of the proposal to the program coordinator with the ***Thesis Project Proposal Evaluation Form***.
 - This approval cannot take place prior to being reviewed by the thesis advisor and second reader of initial drafts of research instruments to be used in the project.
- Under no circumstance is the student to proceed to write and submit sections of his/her thesis report until the student has received the ***Thesis Project Proposal Evaluation Form***. This signifies an approved thesis proposal by the thesis advisor, second reader and program director; upon receipt of the ***Thesis Project Proposal Evaluation Form*** only then may the student begin to write the thesis report.
- Approval must take place no later than **September 1st** of the intended graduation year. The return of the project proposal grade sheet to the student by the program coordinator signifies the approval of the proposal. There are two forms of approval: Full Approval and Provisional Approval.
 - **Full Approval** (instrument[s] included). Full approval will not be granted until the instrument(s) has been approved by the thesis advisor.
 - **Provisional Approval** (instrument[s] yet to be submitted). This approval allows the student to begin work on their thesis project while also developing the research instruments to be used in the thesis project.

Thesis Project Proposal Submission

Form Instructions for Thesis Advisors:

1. Use the ***Thesis Project Proposal Evaluation Form*** to submit the proposal provided by the program coordinator.
2. Sign and date it, indicating the type of approval, full or provisional.
3. The second reader must also approve and sign the proposal.
4. Return proposal and signed evaluation form to the program coordinator.

Implementation Guidelines

During the implementation of the thesis project, the student may utilize the thesis advisor as a consultant. This is particularly important whenever questions concerning modification of the project design arise. The thesis project proposal should be viewed as a contract between the student and the examining committee. Changes of that contract without prior approval by the thesis advisor will put the student's work at risk.

Other resource persons, from Bethel or elsewhere, may be consulted during project implementation. The thesis advisor may suggest such persons to advise the student in areas outside his/her field of expertise.

Communication with the thesis advisor is particularly important at this stage. Following this procedure will give the student early feedback on the acceptability and/or needed revisions in patterns of organization or writing. **A chapter-by-chapter procedure of submission and feedback from the thesis advisor is the expected pattern.** The student is also to submit a first draft of the **first three chapters** to the technical reader for review of style and form issues.

The thesis advisor is responsible for reading the student's material for content and organization. Following thesis advisor identification of problems and suggestions for improvement, it is the student's responsibility to respond concerning these issues. The thesis advisor is not to function as an editor of form and style but will pass along necessary revisions suggested by the technical reader. If material continues to be submitted which does not conform to style and form expectations, it will be returned as unacceptable for submission.

During the writing process and chapter-by-chapter submission, the technical reader is only to receive the first three chapters for review. The technical reader does not see any other part of the thesis project report again until the student submits the first full draft of the thesis project report.

- No later than **November 1** of the intended graduation year, one copy of the first three chapters, title page, table of contents, and bibliography are to be submitted to the technical reader for review. Submissions should be sent via e-mail in final form (no mark-up).
- By **January 15** of the intended graduation year, final copy of thesis due to the student's thesis advisor. Submitting to the broader committee on February 1 will not be permitted unless this January 15th deadline is met. The thesis advisor may notify the D.Min. office that a student is not ready to move forward in this year's graduation cycle if the student's document is not satisfactory at this point.
- By **February 1** of the intended graduation year, one copy of the thesis project report is to be submitted to the thesis advisor, second reader, technical reader, and research design reader. This is considered the first final copy submission and should be in appropriate thesis project format.
- It is the student's responsibility to submit all materials to the various readers in the format that they request.
- In **mid/late February** of the intended graduation year, an oral defense of the thesis topic will be scheduled for each potential graduate with members of the thesis examining committee.

- The thesis advisor will schedule a meeting for review of the report. The report will be returned to the student by **March 1** with mandatory corrections, suggested modifications and revisions.

Thesis Report

March 1: At this point two options are open to the candidate.

1. If the suggested changes can be made within two months, revision can take place for submission of a final copy by **April 1**.
2. If the suggested changes are of such a nature that they cannot be completed by April 1, the student may petition the director for a one-year extension for completion of the program. Decisions concerning this petition will be made in consultation with the thesis advisor.

By **April 1** of the intended graduation year, the final project (with all suggested corrections made) will be submitted to the library reader. The library reader will review the thesis project for style and form as it relates to binding, and give final comments to the student for minor revisions. The final project is due to the thesis advisor who will do a last review of the report. Primary consideration will be given to the candidate's responsiveness to the committee's earlier guidance. The thesis advisor is responsible for supervision of any corrections to be made in the final draft copies of the thesis project.

By **May 1** of the intended graduation year, a decision will be made by the thesis advisor concerning a grade for the thesis project and that grade will be submitted to the program coordinator on the Thesis Project Evaluation Report. (Note: there is also a one-page Thesis Approval Sheet to be signed and dated by all members of the examining committee and placed in the front of the library bound copies).

If the grade given is less than passing (B), there is no option for continuance in the program.

By **May 1** of the intended graduation year, a thesis executive summary is also due to the program coordinator by e-mail for the colloquium and distribution to other graduates.

Three corrected, unbound copies on special paper (see section 7) are to be submitted by the student to the program coordinator by May 15.

These three copies will be bound and added to the holdings of the library at St. Paul and San Diego. Bethel will only bind the three copies for the library collection. The candidate is encouraged to contact a bindery where they live in order to have other thesis project copies bound. The bindery that Bethel Seminary uses is:

Houchen Bindery
340 First Street
Utica NE 68456
402-534-2261
800-869-0420
Fax: 402-534-2761

A colloquium completes the responsibilities related to the thesis project. All candidates who have received a passing grade on the thesis project will participate in a colloquium on the day prior to commencement. Participation in the colloquium will require circulation of an executive summary of the project to other participants and an oral presentation for interaction and feedback.

Thesis Report Outline

The following constitutes the organization of the thesis project report. Italicized front matter items must be present in the report. Other items should generally be present in the sequence indicated. Significant changes to the outline structure require approval from the student's thesis advisor and the program director. Chapter titles should be individualized to reflect the subject focus of the project.

Title Page
Blank Page
Acknowledgements
Preface
Table of Contents
List of Illustrations
List of Tables
List of Abbreviations
Glossary
Abstract
Dedication
Epigraph

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE: PROBLEM AND RESEARCH DESIGN (The content of Sections I & IV of the Thesis Project Proposal rewritten in a user-friendly manner to introduce the reader to the project, its purpose and its design.)

CHAPTER TWO: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION (Expansion of Section II of the Thesis Project Proposal developing the biblical, theological and ministry rationale for the project.)

CHAPTER THREE: REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE (Expansion of Section III of the Thesis Project Proposal demonstrating your knowledge of the issues, resources and persons relevant to the project.)

CHAPTER FOUR: PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH METHODS (Review of the project as it was actually carried out including description of and rationale for any changes from the project design. Be sure to address both *what* was done in the study and *why* it was done. A defense of the projects methods is to be grounded in the literature related to your particular research methodology.)

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS (Presentation and analysis of data generated by the project. This chapter is to be focused on reporting in an objective manner what was found through research project and analysis of the associated data. Be sure to explicitly link your findings to the data generated in the research project.)

CHAPTER SIX: EVALUATION AND DISCUSSION (Discussion of (a) the strengths and weaknesses of the project design and implementation including suggested modifications for improvement, and (b) the overall findings of the study. While chapter five is to be an objective presentation of the study's findings, chapter six is the place for researchers to provide their perspective on the findings, engaging the benefits and challenges associated with the findings as they relate to the practice of ministry.)

CHAPTER SEVEN: REFLECTION (Description of the author's personal growth through the project plus identification of further possible research questions generated by the project.)

APPENDICES

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Guiding the Theological Reflection Chapter

1. Why is theological reflection needed?
 - A. An ATS requirement in D.Min. programs is that they are to include:
 1. "An advanced understanding and integration of ministry in relation to various theological disciplines."
 2. "The formulation of a comprehensive and critical understanding of ministry in which theory and practice interactively inform each other."
 - B. All good practice is rooted in good theory.

Some theory stands behind every practice. We must ask whether the theory under girding the ministry activity in each project is

 - biblically and theologically sound
 - biblically and theologically relevant to the project ministry
 - adequately reflective of the reality of the project context
2. What do you do in the theological reflection chapter?
 - A. Show that the ministry goals of the project are rooted in the Bible, theological tradition and/or denominational history. (What will you be doing and WHY?)
 - B. Show that the methods to be used in the project are influenced by/consistent with biblical/theological/traditional values and assumptions. (How will you do this and WHY?)
2. What are some general guidelines?
 - A. Start broadly and narrow quickly to the topic of the project using pyramid style.
 - B. Work theologically, systematically summarizing the whole of scripture, not simply quoting selected Bible texts. Citation of texts is needed, but these should document broad biblical principles.

- C. Avoid unsupported assertions based on personal experience except for illustrative purposes. Use a descriptive (research) style rather than a persuasive (preaching) style.
- D. Use classic theological books, contemporary theological essays and exegetical biblical commentaries rather than “how to” books by practitioners.
- E. Fifteen sources, not including scripture citations, is the minimum guideline.

Guidelines and Considerations for the Theological Reflection Chapter

Structural Items

Thesis

The chapter on the biblical and theological foundations of your project (generally chapter 2) must have a sustainable and clearly articulated thesis. This thesis is modified from the whole project's thesis and is designed to support the major thesis. Generally, the thesis of this chapter is also formed as a direct answer to a sub-problem identified in the first chapter. This section is NOT to be simply an exploration of the topic, but rather must argue that the biblical and theological disciplines support the thesis' claim. (To put this another way, this section is supposed to be a survey – much like chapter three – of the relevant research that has been done on your topic. Thus, it should have a sub-thesis that supports that claim.)

Assumptions

Special care must be made to make sure that the assumptions given in the first chapter of the thesis are not the same as the thesis of chapter two. Doing so would constitute a classic case of “begging the question.” In Logic (as a discipline) when one's premise (in this case your assumptions) are the same as your conclusion (the thesis of the chapter) you commit the “begging the question” fallacy. For example, if you assume in chapter one that, “The Bible has much to say about transformational leadership,” your thesis in chapter two cannot be that, “The Bible has much to say about transformational leadership.” The best practice would be to eliminate the assumption from your thesis and do the work of demonstrating your conclusion in chapter two.

Counter-arguments

Major counter-arguments to your thesis should be addressed and refuted. It is especially important to identify other opinions on biblical texts or theological positions that would run counter to your thesis. Remember, this is an academic pursuit and your audience is other experts (and soon to be experts) in the field, not parishioners.

Depth vs. Breadth

In biblical and theological surveys there is always a judgment call to be made whether to do in-depth study on a few exemplars or to survey the breadth of the topic. If you use the survey method make sure that you cover the topic thoroughly using a significant portion of the Bible (see section on generalization below) so that you are accurately capturing the Bible's presentation of that topic. If your topic is most related to a specific portion of the Bible (e.g., Old Testament, New Testament, Pentateuch, Paul, etc.), you must provide a rationale for why you are focusing your work on this portion of the Bible. If you are doing an in-depth study, pick a few (e.g., three or four) texts to focus on for your study and avoid making your conclusions

broad generalizations. You may also start broad and quickly narrow to relevant biblical examples; again be careful of generalizations. The same is true with the theological tradition.

Generalization

Be especially careful in your Bible and theology section not to make generalizations. Make sure that you do not generalize the interpretation of the Bible (for example, do not assume that because the New Testament presents material in one way, the rest of the Bible does it in the same way). Also, do not generalize theological claims, citing one theologian on a topic does not mean that “all theologians” or even “most theologians” agree with you. Avoid words like “all” and “most” unless you are sure that this is really the case. Phrases like “evangelical view”, “biblical worldview”, etc. may have significance to you, but are too general to be helpful. In short, defend your assertions, provide biblical or theological examples and cite authorities whenever you make a claim.

Additional Note If you are in need of a “brush up” on biblical exegesis and/or theological method please feel free to contact the seminary library for resources to help you in the process of doing this chapter.

Resource Items

References

As with any other academic discipline, the resources used must be contemporary, scholarly and relevant. As a rule of thumb, no resource more than thirty to forty years old should be used unless justification for that source is given within the text of the thesis.

Popular vs. Scholarly Sources

Scholarly sources should be used. Scholarly sources are simply defined as scholars writing to scholars. Special care should be used in the chapter to use scholars of Bible and theology. Be especially careful of the use of practitioner’s work in this chapter. As a rule of thumb the number of sources that you interact with should be roughly equivalent to the number of pages that you have in the chapter.

Sermon vs. Academic

The Doctor of Ministry thesis is an academic paper and, as such, it must be written in an academic style. Avoid sermonic rhetoric, which can be appropriate in a sermon, but not in an academic paper. Assertions should be supported with sources, definitions must never be assumed and proof-texting must be avoided at all costs.

Opinion vs. Statement

All major (and most minor) claims must be backed up with scholarly support. It is not appropriate in a scholarly paper to simply make a claim; it must be supported by scholarship. Opinions may be included in the paper, but only when stated as opinion within the thesis and kept to a minimum.

Miscellaneous

Length

Remember, you are not getting graded based on the number of pages that you write! A shorter and more concise chapter is much preferable to a long and rambling one. Of course, you need to be thorough, but this does not necessarily mean longer.

Style and Formatting

You must use (as with the rest of your thesis) Turabian formatting. This is not a suggestion, but a requirement. The best practice is to start your writing by using Turabian, this eliminates the arduous task of having to go back to your paper and re-format it once you are done writing.

Colloquium

Thesis Executive Summary

The executive summary is to be **10-12 pages** in length, double-spaced, with a title page and bibliography (not included in page count) and written following the D.Min. style and form guidelines. The following categories are to be explored in the summary:

1. clear statement of problem addressed in the thesis project
2. a synopsis of the integration of the Biblical and contemporary literature review
3. instrument(s) employed and the outcomes
4. recommendations and conclusions

Each candidate will submit an executive summary **no later than May 1** of the year of intended graduation by e-mail to the program coordinator who will then distribute them via e-mail to other candidates and thesis advisors.

A memo will be sent in the spring regarding the specific colloquium dates and instructions. In preparation for the colloquium, each student is expected to read the student colloquium group summaries and be prepared to ask at least one question of each presenter.

Each presentation is last 30 minutes—15 minutes for the presentation and 15 minutes for question and answer time.

Colloquium Presentation

The colloquium will give each graduate an opportunity to present his/her thesis project before fellow students, thesis advisors and other faculty. When preparing for the colloquium, the following guidelines are to be used:

1. What are the five most significant findings in your thesis project?
2. What are the lessons learned from your thesis project (recommendations and conclusions)?
3. How will your thesis project contribute to ministry/social innovation?
4. What further areas of study are suggested by the project?

The audience will be familiar with each graduate's thesis project by reading the executive summary, so it is important that the graduate use the presentation time expanding on the thesis project in a more personal way.

Microfilming / Indexing Thesis Projects

Theological Research Exchange Network, TREN, microfilms and indexes graduate level work; they specialize in the area of religion on both masters and doctoral levels. TREN microfilms research papers and disseminates this information in an online index at <http://www.tren.com>.

Research in Ministry, RIM® Online, is a database that indexes Doctor of Ministry projects and theses from reporting schools of theology accredited by the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada. RIM is an abstracting and indexing service that provides a useful access tool for clergy, students, and others on practical aspects of ministry.

It is required that D.Min. graduates have his/her thesis microfilmed and published with TREN and RIM by completing the TREN Microfilm Distribution Agreement, and RIM Submission Form provided by the D.Min. office.

This process helps to secure permission from students to duplicate and distribute their theses and dissertations. Students also submit an electronic PDF copy of his/her final thesis to the program coordinator in the D.Min. office.

TREN will also register the copyright of a student's thesis with the Library of Congress. The cost for this service is \$60.00 payable by Cashier's Check or Money Order to TREN. The copyright service is optional.

For TREN to register copyright on a student's behalf:

1. Complete the TREN Agreement Form provided by the D.Min. office.
2. Enclose a \$60 money order or cashier's check payable to TREN.
3. Send the check or money order and TREN Agreement Form to:
D.Min. Program Coordinator
Bethel Seminary
3949 Bethel Drive
St. Paul MN 55112

If students have questions regarding the process for microfilming the thesis project, please contact Robert Jones of TREN directly at:

Theological Research Exchange Network
PO Box 30183
Portland OR 97294-3183
Phone: 800-334-8736
Email: rwjones@tren.com
Web: <http://www.tren.com>

For more information about *RIM® Online*, to submit an abstract of the thesis, and to review submission guidelines visit http://rim.atla.com/star/rimonline_login.htm. There is no deadline for submissions. The abstract must not be longer than 100 words.