



Dominican School of Philosophy & Theology

Navigating Through
the Requirements for the
MA Programs

Overview

By the end of this workshop you should understand:

The importance of

- *DSPT Student Handbook*

In a general way, that each MA program has

- Particular goals and outcomes
- Core requirements and “variable” elements
- Unique and common means of assessing your progress

How to integrate your decision-making by knowing:

- The way core and “variable” elements work together with
- DSPT/GTU Faculty resources
- DSPT/GTU academic and student services resources
- the way to coordinate all of these elements into an overarching plan for completing your thesis in the proposed time period.

Program Requirements

- Program Goals and Outcomes
 - Help you understand what will be offered to you and expected from you
 - ALWAYS REFER TO THE DSPT [STUDENT HANDBOOK](#) (your *other bible!*)
- Degree Requirements, e.g. DSPT [MA \(Theology\)](#), *Thesis Option*
 - Area of Concentration
 - Core courses
 - Electives
 - Evaluative tools, e.g. exams, grades, DSPT portfolio elements, thesis

Program Requirements

Choosing Electives

- Core requirements help build broad knowledge base
 - Distribution requirements (know the nomenclature for courses at GTU)
 - See list of DSPT courses: <https://www.dspt.edu/syllabi-and-course-information>
 - SPECIAL THIS YEAR... for those interested in Christian-Islamic philosophy

- Electives build upon core requirements. When choosing electives, consider:
 - Selecting topics that help you explore area(s) of interest related to thesis
 - For MATH: select an area of concentration
 - Take at least four courses from the area)
 - at least two are **4000-level**
 - SRC are useful, but remember that Faculty do not receive remuneration

Program Requirements

Certification in Foreign Language Proficiency

- Not just a hoop! Consider it as a *research tool* for thesis work
- May be fulfilled by:
 - Approved GTU/UCB coursework (summers)
 - GTU examination (offered Sep, Feb, or May)
 - [Prior coursework approved by petition of Dean]
- DEADLINE for DSPT students: by the beginning of 3rd semester
- RESOURCES: GTU Library Reference Desk has sample/practice exams

Program Requirements

Research Readiness Paper Review ([RRP Review](#))

PURPOSE: Demonstrate/assess your skills for doing graduate-level research

- choose a course *now* and get permission from instructor
- complete paper by end of 1st semester in program

Understanding “In Thesis” Units

Purpose of “In Thesis”

- to create space in your personal schedule committed to classroom & homework
- thereby allowing a structure which meets *your* needs for research & writing.

To get the most of “In Thesis” units, first consider

- What is *your* level of comfort/skill for academic research & writing? [RRP Review; otherwise, DSPT students: consider taking MA 1000, “GTU MA Research Methods”]
- Do you want/need extra time to research and write the thesis proposal?
- Do you want/need extra time to utilize GTU Library resources, e.g. meet w/ research librarian, attend Library [workshops](#), etc.
- SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY THIS YEAR... 2 non-credit workshops offered by DSPT Faculty

Understanding “In Thesis” Units

Take “In Thesis” in a way which suits your needs

- Plan and commit to a *regular* schedule of research equivalent in time to the amount of hours spent on a 3-unit course. For example:
 - 3 units over two semesters (*minimum* of 9 hours/week)
 - 6 units in one semester (*minimum* of 18 hours/week)
 - Finish 3 units of “In Thesis” by 3rd semester, i.e. it is not recommended to take all 6 units in last semester
- “In continuation” – a status available for students who have completed “tuition residency” requirement, i.e. paid for 48 semester units of tuition, and who need longer time to complete their thesis.

The Thesis Proposal

Purpose of the Thesis Proposal

- demonstrate your ability to organize your thoughts on a topic into a *brief & coherent scholarly* statement.
- Key to a “Successful” Proposal
Consult either the DSPT “[Thesis Proposal Guidelines](#)” or the GTU MA Handbook.
DSPT MA students must submit the [Thesis Proposal Petition](#)
- Watch for workshop(s) related to the proposal to be offered in S2020 as Part 2 of WS 1000
- Plan to do *significant consulting* with the proposed thesis coordinator – which implies that you’ve been scouting out possibilities. Find a faculty person who “matches”
 - **Academic expertise:** must match your research interests (may/not be advisor)
 - **Professional expertise:** in publishing, academic leadership, etc.
 - **Pedagogical style:** the person must work well *for you*; *are you willing to be guided?!*

The Thesis Proposal

Leave enough time to do *several* re-writes before the proposal is due

- Review samples available from DSPT Registrar
- Submit rough draft to proposed thesis coordinator for feedback
- Submit revised version to other suggested readers
- For DSPT students: submit final version to department chair (or Dean for Concurrent students) one week prior to scheduled meeting of the department(s)

Research & Writing

Once the proposal has been approved,

DON'T HIDE! Rather, take the initiative to

- Work *closely & regularly* with your thesis coordinator (who is now also your advisor)
- Don't assume you know what s/he expects
- Take advantage of their expertise to assist you in focusing your ideas and helping you find useful resources

Understand the thesis format guidelines on two levels :

- Content (see DSPT “[Thesis Review Form](#)”)
- Format ... *this* is the person you ought to fear 😊 ...(see GTU “[Master's Thesis Guidelines](#)”)

Research & Writing

By establishing & maintaining clear expectations with all other committee members . . .

- Ensure each member is “on board” with your ideas and research approach;
- Ensure you understand everyone’s preferences: “hands on” or “hands off”

You can avoid being surprised at your defense

- Not merely a “test,” the defense is an opportunity to demonstrate your skills in oral communication and for *dialog* with other professionals in your field
- The questions asked by committee members should never be about fundamental flaws in your research design and/or conclusions (which should be addressed *well* beforehand)

Summary - Developing General Principles

1. Understand how component pieces work together
 - required courses – distribution and, as relevant, area of concentration
 - electives
 - foreign language proficiency
 - thesis proposal (DSPT MA)/Thesis Committee Request Form (GTU MA)
2. You are in charge, so take the initiative to
 - Articulate your goals and expectations
 - Determine your academic & research interests
 - Evaluate your academic strengths & weaknesses
 - Be familiar with thesis writing guidelines
 - Be familiar with program requirements, posted deadlines, etc.

Some General Principles

3. It's never too early to . . .

- Begin thinking about your thesis topic
 - What is of interest to me?
 - Where do my interests intersect w/ faculty expertise?
 - What are my *long-term* interests and goals?
- Engage the skill and wisdom of your faculty **advisor**
- Demonstrate foreign language proficiency – *it's more than just a hoop!*
- Find a possible thesis coordinator

Develop a Time Line That's *Yours*

Know & anticipate deadlines (consult Handbooks & calendars)

Have alternative plan(s), e.g. can't meet April 1st deadline, so . . .

Understand the *Ultimate Deadline*: "[Thesis Filing/Oral Exam Extension Agreement](#)" (Handbook, p. 32) ... close of late reg. period

First Semester (Fall, 1 st year)	Second Semester (Spring, 1 st year)	Third Semester (Fall, 2 nd year)	Fourth Semester (Spring, 2 nd year)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin fulfilling core reqs • Meet w/ Faculty whose research is of interest • Choose one course which will allow completion of RRP • Complete RRP • Work on foreign language requirement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ATTEND JANUARY WORKSHOP ON MA THESIS PROPOSAL • Consider elective(s) • Meet with Faculty who might serve as thesis coordinator or committee members • Do background research • Update/improve research/writing skills based on RRP results • Work on foreign language requirement and <u>complete by beginning of next semester</u> • Determine how to use "In Thesis" units 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with proposed thesis coordinator; consult w/ other proposed committee members • Submit proposal for approval (Sep/Nov) • Continue research (register for "In Thesis" units) • File GTU MA Thesis Committee Request Form" at least 90 days prior to defense. N.B. Must have fulfilled foreign language requirement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • File DSPT/GTU "Intent to Graduate" form by Feb 1 • Work w/ thesis coordinator • File GTU "Statement of Readiness & Scheduling Request Form" 4-6 weeks before defense • Submit final version of thesis to committee members (early March) • Defend (2 weeks before published deadline [4/1]) • File "Graduation Checklist" by published deadline • File <i>completed</i> thesis by published deadline OR extend

Concurrent MA Students

Principles all the same for DSPT MAPH + DSPT MATH *or* GTU MA

63 units total: 54 units of coursework + 9 units of “In Thesis” (thesis of 120 pages)

6 Semesters (3 Years) to complete, so ...

First Semester (Fall, 1 st year)	Second Semester (Spring, 1 st year)	Third Semester (Fall, 2 nd year)	Fourth Semester (Spring, 2 nd year)	Fifth Semester (Fall, 3 rd year)	Sixth Semester (Spring, 3 rd year)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin fulfilling core reqs (consider how to build skills <i>jointly</i>, i.e. PH and TH) • Choose one course which will allow completion of RRP • Complete RRP • Work on foreign language requirement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue building <u>joint foundational skills</u> in PH and TH • Meet w/ Faculty whose research is of interest to you • Update/improve research/writing skills based on RRP results • Work on foreign language requirement and <u>complete by beginning of next semester</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine area(a) needed for elective coursework • Determine how to use “In Thesis” units • Meet with Faculty who might serve as thesis coordinator or committee members • Do background research for possible thesis topic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ATTEND JANUARY WORKSHOP ON MA THESIS PROPOSAL • Continue with coursework • Meet with proposed thesis coordinator; consult w/ other proposed committee members • Begin research (register for 3 units “In Thesis” units) • Submit proposal for approval (Feb/Apr) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue with coursework • Submit proposal for approval (Sep/Nov) • “In Thesis” work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • File DSPT/GTU “Intent to Graduate” form by Feb 1 • File GTU “Statement of Readiness & Scheduling Request Form” 4-6 weeks before defense • Work w/ thesis coordinator • Submit final version of thesis to committee members (early March) • Defend (2 weeks before published deadline [4/1]) • File “Graduation Checklist” by published deadline • File <i>completed</i> thesis by published deadline OR extend