

DOMINICAN SCHOOL  
OF PHILOSOPHY & THEOLOGY

**Format & Procedure for Exam in a Required Area,  
MA (Theology), Exam Option**

Students enrolled in the MA (Theology) Exam Option, in addition to choosing an area of concentration for coursework, also choose an area for examination from one of the three following disciplines: Biblical Studies, Systematic Theology, or Moral Theology. Students must pass a three-hour, closed book examination on two courses, chosen by the student and approved by the student's Advisor, taken from the chosen examination area. These are ordinarily to be courses taught by DSPT faculty. The examination questions will be drawn from study questions provided by the faculty which reflect the material of the specific semester in which the student took each course. The required area in which the student chooses to take the examination must be different from the area of concentration in order to ensure a breadth of knowledge and the opportunity to integrate principles from different areas of theological inquiry.

**Theology Exam Format.** The questions for the exam will be taken from a series of study questions composed by the professors who teach the courses that serve as the basis for the exam. There will be five to six study questions per course. The two questions presented to the student for each course will be determined by the professors and revealed to the student immediately prior to the exam. The professor of each course will evaluate the answers and assign a grade for each question. To receive a "pass" for **the exam** requires passing *each of the four questions*.

The examination will be "closed book" and proctored. Students are not permitted to use books, notes, or electronic aids during the exam. The expectation is for the student to produce more than bullet points and disjointed paragraphs, but rather to compose essays in response to the questions, demonstrating a coherent thought process. The writing of these essays should conform to expected standards of academic writing, including use of proper English, grammar, and spelling. The answers will be hand-written and photocopied at the end of the exam, and the student will be responsible for transcribing them into a legible format, making only grammatical and syntactical changes, but no substantive ones.

The exams will be scheduled once toward the end of each semester, with the dates posted on the academic calendar. Students wishing to take the exam in a given semester must register no later than the close of the late registration period of that semester. Categories for grading are: *pass*, *fail with possibility of retaking the exam*, or *fail without possibility of retaking the exam*. In the case of a "*fail with possibility...*", the student may petition to retake the exam, answering a new question or questions in place of the ones that were failed, in a single exam period that allots 45 minutes for each question to be answered. These new questions will also be chosen by the professor of the course from which they are taken. Dates for students retaking an exam will be scheduled on an ad hoc basis. A student may be re-examined no more than two times (for a total of three examinations).

Ordinarily, those two professors from the chosen courses shall grade the exams and submit the grade to the Theology Department Chair. If the professor of the chosen course is unavailable for grading, the Department Chair will select a substitute. The student must attain a passing grade for all four questions to pass the exam. As noted, the categories for grading are: *pass*, *fail with*

*possibility of retaking the exam, or fail without possibility of retaking the exam.* Thus, the lowest of the four grades becomes the final overall result for the exam.

**Exam Procedure:** Normally, at least three months before the exam date, the Theology Department Chair elicits from the professors of each chosen class five to six study questions from each of those classes. That list is forwarded to the student, normally at least two months before the exam. The exam is ordinarily scheduled each semester for the Saturday that falls six days before the final Friday of instruction. At least three weeks before the exam, the Department Chair asks the professor of each chosen course to inform the Department Chair which two questions from that course are to be presented to the student. The Department Chair collects the four questions together in a single document suitable for printing. The Department Chair forwards these two questions, along with any instructions, to the Proctor, who administers the exam (or the Department Chair may act as Proctor). Just before the beginning of the exam, the Proctor shall review the procedure for the exam with the student. Then, at the beginning of the exam, the Proctor shall supply to the student a printed copy of the four questions to answered, along with plain paper (with some identifying characteristic). The student shall write a response to each question only on this paper supplied by the Proctor. The student shall write on only one side of each sheet of the paper, numbering each page, writing his/her name on each page, and shall write on the first page the total number of pages comprising all the responses written (in addition to the page containing the exam questions).

After the exam, the Proctor shall create an electronic copy (scanned) and two photocopies of the complete responses, sending an electronic copy and the two paper copies to the Theology Department Chair. The Proctor shall give the original set of responses back to the student. The student then, within three days, shall transcribe the responses into typewritten form and shall send this transcription electronically to the Theology Department Chair. The Theology Department Chair shall forward the electronic scanned copy, the paper copy, and the student's transcription to each reader. The student's transcription may correct only typographical errors or errors in punctuation or basic grammar; the transcription may introduce no new words, no new sentence structure, nor any material of substance. The graders shall ensure that the student's transcription conforms to these restrictions.

Each reader shall grade the responses to both questions, communicating the result to the Theology Department Chair. The Department Chair shall send a copy of the Exam Form, the Exam Evaluation Form, and a copy of the student's electronic transcription to the Academic Dean and the Registrar (electronic copies going to the Dean and Registrar, and paper copies going to the Registrar alone). At that time, the Department Chair shall communicate the overall result (i.e., *pass, fail with possibility of retaking the exam, or fail without possibility of retaking the exam*) to the student; the Department Chair may also relate to the student any substantive feedback by those who graded the exam. The Registrar shall file the results of the exam in the student's record, including in Populi (visible to the student as a pseudo-course entitled "MA 5700 – MATH Capstone Exam," under the "Assignments" for that entry).

*This document is subject to change without notice. For the most current, official policies regarding examinations, refer to the DSPT Student Handbook.*