



LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL
SOUTHERN
SEMINARY

**HANDBOOK FOR
MASTER OF SACRED THEOLOGY
DEGREE PROGRAM**

For Implementation beginning January 1, 2010

**Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary
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PREFACE

The primary purpose of the Master of Sacred Theology (STM) degree is to provide additional academic preparation beyond the Master of Divinity degree for Christian leadership in pastoral ministry or in preparation for further graduate work. The degree may be undertaken in one of four different areas of concentration:

- (1) Biblical Studies
- (2) Church History and Systematic Theology
- (3) Ecumenical Theology
- (4) Pastoral Practices and Theology

The STM handbook is intended to supplement the information in the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary Academic Catalog by giving further details regarding the administration of the degree program and the process of advancement through the program.

This handbook takes effect on January 1, 2010.

Questions and comments are always welcome.

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MASTER OF SACRED THEOLOGY DEGREE

I. General Description

Master of Sacred Theology (STM) degree is an opportunity to provide a fuller mastery of one area or discipline of theological study than is normally provided in a first graduate theological degree. The primary goals include an advanced understanding of a focused area or discipline in the context of general theological study, the capacity to use research methods and resources in the discipline, and the ability to formulate productive questions.

The STM program allows considerable latitude for candidates to pursue individual courses of theological study and research, under faculty supervision, within a chosen area of concentration. Some candidates may choose to concentrate their studies in particular fields (e.g., New Testament, Reformation Theology, Liturgics), while others may draw upon the resources of various divisions. The broad requirement for the degree is that each candidate must successfully complete 30 semester hours of study (the equivalent of ten course credits), including an integrative study or thesis.

II. Academic Course Work

A. Required Academic Credits

The specific design of each candidate's program will be determined in consultation with his or her designated faculty advisor, who will normally serve as supervisor of the candidate's STM integrative study or thesis project.

The STM degree requires 30 semester hours, met by choosing one of two optional tracks.

1. Option I is to complete the required 30 hours by means of 10 courses and an integrative study with colloquy.
2. Option II is to complete the required 30 hours by means of 8 courses (24 semester hours), a thesis (6 semester hours), and a thesis colloquy.

All STM students must successfully complete a minimum of 5 courses (15 semester hours) in the chosen area of concentration and 1 course (3 semester hours) in a different area of concentration. A minimum of 2 courses must include substantial research papers as part of the course requirements. All research papers will conform to academic conventions of format and style.

B. Categories of Course Work

Two categories of academic work are distinguished in designing individual programs.

1. *Regular Academic Courses*. These are listed in the LTSS catalog. In courses that are not designated as 400 level course, the STM candidate and the professor will need to negotiate additional work to be completed for STM credit.
2. *Contract Courses* designed by the candidate and faculty member to address areas of interest not covered *in the* regular seminary curriculum. A “contract course” form will need to be filled out and approved by the Dean.

A maximum of 4 courses (12 semester hours) may be transferred from advanced degree courses satisfactorily completed at other accredited institutions while a student at Southern Seminary.

C. Registration Deadline and Course Changes

Procedures, regulations, and deadlines for such items as registration and changing and dropping courses in the Master of Sacred Theology degree program are the same as those in the Master of Divinity degree program.

D. Evaluation and Grading

The seminary has adopted a pass/fail system of evaluation, which will also apply to the course work of STM students. At the end of the semester the instructor will provide the student with a completed evaluation form, noting the student’s performance in regard to several areas of competence related to the work of the class. The student is welcome to confer with the instructor regarding the evaluations that are made.

The student’s transcript will carry either a P or an F for each course. Should one receive an F in any course, a consultation will occur with the advisor, the Director of the STM Program and the Dean to determine the appropriateness of the student’s continuing in the degree program. Under no circumstances will a student be continued if a second F is received.

STM students who enroll in the course 595 “Thesis Seminar” will receive credit for the course upon demonstration of research. The faculty advisor will approve the course for credit.

E. Foreign Language Requirements

Each STM candidate is required to demonstrate language competency appropriate to the research requirements in the area of concentration, to be determined by consultation with the advisor and approval by the Director of

the STM Program. Students are expected to obtain language competency outside of the normal curriculum and no credit is earned toward the degree for language study.

III. The Integrative Study Option or Thesis Option

In order to complete the requirements for the STM degree, each candidate must successfully complete an integrative study or thesis in his or her area of specialized research. This work will be planned and implemented in each case under the supervision of a principal faculty advisor and an advisory committee.

The purpose of the **Thesis** is to pursue in depth a particular topic by means of a research paper of approximately 75 pages and thesis colloquy before the advisory committee.

The purpose of the **Integrative Study** is to establish integration of a student's work in the area of concentration by means of an oral colloquy before the advisory committee.

A. THESIS OPTION—PROPOSAL, THESIS, DEFENSE

1. Submission of a Proposal

A student in the STM degree program is eligible to submit a proposal for a thesis after successful completion of 3 courses in the area of concentration, 1 course in another area, and demonstration of language competency. Full time students, expecting to graduate in one year, must submit the proposal before **the first day of the second semester**. The proposal must be submitted no later than eight semesters following admission to the degree program.

Each proposal should be approximately 4-5 typewritten (double-spaced) pages in length and contain the following items.

- 1) Approval of Proposal Form (form sample in appendix)
- 2) An initial thesis statement, no more than a paragraph in length (two or three sentences), articulating clearly what the thesis is expected to demonstrate;
- 3) A selected bibliography of major works already consulted in preliminary research .

The proposal should be submitted to the principal advisor, who signs the form indicating approval, and forwards the proposal to the Director of the STM program.

- 1) In consultation with the Director, the Dean appoints the advisory committee.
- 2) The Director will distribute copies of the proposal to advisory committee members for their approval.
- 3) Once approved, the candidate will be officially notified by the Director, and the Approval of Proposal form will be sent to the Registrar for the candidate's academic file.

Each candidate's proposal must be reviewed and approved both by his or her advisory committee no later than **February 15** for spring conferral of the degree.

2. Submission of Thesis

By **April 1 of the year in which a candidate expects to be awarded the STM degree**, three copies of the complete draft of the thesis, including footnotes and bibliography, must be received in the office of the Director of the STM Program of the academic year in which a candidate expects to be awarded the STM degree. The office of the Director will oversee distribution of the draft copies to the principal advisor and the other members of the advisory committee.

By **April 15**, the principal advisor will report in writing to the candidate on the evaluation of the advisory committee, differentiating between requirements and recommendations for revision. The primary advisor will notify the Director of the STM Program that the thesis is ready (or is not ready) for final revisions and thesis defense.

By **April 30**, all revisions mandated the advisory committee must be incorporated by the candidate into the final form of the thesis and two unbound copies on acid-free paper must be delivered to the office of the Director..

3. Thesis Defense

By the **last day of classes for the spring term**, the candidate must have successfully completed a thesis defense with the advisory committee. The principal advisor will notify the Director of the STM Program that the colloquy is successfully completed.

Upon successful completion of the thesis defense, the Director will notify the Dean and the librarian that the thesis has been formally accepted. The librarian will arrange to have one copy bound and deposited in the library. Candidates may contact the library for information on binding of additional copies of the thesis at the candidate's expense. The second copy will be deposited in the Archives.

^B. INTEGRATIVE STUDY OPTION—PROPOSAL, COLLOQUY

1. Submission of a Proposal

A student in the STM degree program is eligible to submit a proposal for an integrative study after successful completion of 3 courses in the area of concentration, 1 course in another area, and demonstration of language competency. Full time students, expecting to graduate in one year, must submit the proposal **before the first day of the second semester**. 2. The proposal must be submitted no later than eight semesters following admission to the degree program.

Each proposal should be approximately 4-5 typewritten (double-spaced) pages in length and contain the following items.

1. Approval of Proposal Form (form sample in appendix)
2. An initial thesis statement, no more than a paragraph in length (two or three sentences), articulating clearly what the integrative study is expected to achieve and indicating two or three possible themes for the integrative study colloquy.
3. A selected bibliography of major works already consulted in preliminary research.

2. Integrative Study Colloquy

1. Before **May 1** of the year of graduation, the candidate engages in an oral colloquy approximately two hours in length with the advisory committee. The candidate should expect to be examined on the two or three themes suggested in the proposal and to field other pertinent questions which may be asked by the committee.
2. The chair of the advisory committee will notify the Director of the STM Program and Dean that the colloquy is successfully completed. .

IV. Principal Advisor and Advisory Committee

Oversight of candidates is undertaken by a principal advisor and an advisory committee in order to provide each candidate with competent guidance.

A. Advisor

An advisor is assigned by the Director of the STM Program to each STM student upon matriculation based upon the student's expressed area of concentration and interests. As the candidate undertakes course work and begins to focus on an area of research, the candidate may request a change in advisor by contacting the Director of the STM program.

B. The Advisory Committee

1. Members

The candidate's primary advisor will serve as chair of the committee. In the proposal for the integrative study or the thesis, the candidate requests two additional members for the committee. The committee is appointed by the Dean.

Normally the members of the advisory committee will be Southern Seminary faculty members; in some circumstances, however, the student may request the appointment of someone who is not a current member of the Southern Seminary faculty to serve on the advisory committee. The Dean approves such a request in consultation with the Director. In no cases will the principal advisor be someone outside the current Southern Seminary faculty, although at the request of the candidate, a principal advisor who leaves the faculty due to retirement or to take another position may, with the Dean's approval, continue as principal advisor or as another member of the advisory committee until the project has been completed.

2. Function

The principal advisor and the other members of the advisory committee are available for consultation with the candidate individually and, at appropriate times, may convene as a committee to review and evaluate the candidate's progress.

V. Duration of the Program

A. The degree can be completed **within two semesters** if the student takes 12 hours each semester.

B. The **degree must be completed by the fifth academic year** after matriculation in the program.

1.."**Active**" students in the Master of Sacred Theology degree program must enroll in at least one course in each academic year.

a. If a STM student **chooses not** to enroll in a course **during a semester**, the student must indicate on the semester's registration form the intent to enroll in another term during that academic year.

b.. Students **who do not enroll in a course every academic year or receive an approved Leave of Absence** will be deemed "withdrawn." Should such a student wish to enroll in a subsequent semester, the student would have to be re-admitted to the seminary.

C. **An Annual Progress Report** is required of each candidate until graduation. This progress report is to be submitted to the Director of the STM Program by **April 1** of each year. See sample report in appendix.

D. Leave of Absence

A request for a leave of absence, in which a candidate **suspends relationship with the program for a period of up to one year and pays no tuition**, will be honored only in exceptional cases. Unusual financial hardship, which requires a candidate to be employed full-time for a period of no more than a year, or a severe health problem, which requires recuperation for no more than one year, may also be considered as reason for an extension.

E. Extension.

A candidate who is unable to meet all degree requirements within the five-year period may, with the support of the advisory committee, be granted a one-year extension.

1. Requests for such an extension shall be submitted in writing to the Director of the STM Program as a part of the Annual Progress Report no later than April 1 of the candidate's fifth academic year in the program. . The request should include

- 1) Indication of progress made to this point,
- 2) A clear plan, with target dates, for completion of the remaining requirements.

VI. Finances

A. Tuition and Fees

Tuition is charged for course work in the STM program. See the current academic catalog for a schedule of tuition and fees.

There are additional fees associated with the completion of the degree and graduation. A thesis fee (\$25) is charged to cover the costs associated with completing the thesis (e.g., binding fees, microfilming fees, etc.). The commencement fee (see current catalog) includes rental of academic regalia appropriate for commencement and announcements. There is a \$250.00 per year continuation fee for each year after the year of enrollment in the STM program.

B. Financial Aid

Applicants to the STM program are eligible for financial aid in any semester in which the student is registered for at least six semester hours. Information is available from the Financial Aid office.

C. Student Housing

Ordinarily only full time STM students are eligible for campus housing.

VII. Library Resources

With more than 100,000 volumes and 1,000 periodicals, the Lineberger library holds substantial resources for research in biblical studies, theology, ethics, history of Christianity, and pastoral practices. In addition, all resources in the other libraries of the Eastern Cluster of Lutheran Seminaries are available upon request. Resources not available in the Eastern Cluster library system may be accessed via interlibrary loan by contacting the reference librarian.

Many helpful resources are available in library regarding the process of research and writing research papers. Two recent publications are:

Rudestam, Kjell E. and Rae R. Newton. *Surviving Your Dissertation: A Comprehensive Guide to Content and Process*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001.

Walliman, Nicholas and Bousmaha Baiche. *Your Research Project: A Step-by-step Guide for the First-time Researcher*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001.

VIII. Professional Development

Southern Seminary encourages membership and participation in professional organizations related to the candidate's field of study. Many groups hold regional

and/or annual meetings at which candidates may share research, make contacts with other scholars, and pursue career opportunities. Some organizations offer student memberships at reduced rates.

Many faculty and STM candidates at Southern Seminary participate in the following organizations:

- American Academy of Religion (AAR)

- American Society of Church History

- Association of Professors & Researchers in Religious Education (APRRE)

- Society of Biblical Literature (SBL)

- Society of Christian Ethics

STM Progress Report (sample)

DATE: [no later than April 1]

TO: Director of STM Program

cc: [Advisor Name]

FROM: [Student Name]

Here is my annual progress report for the academic year [dates]:

[Include information about any area listed below in which there has been progress since the last annual report.]

1. Academic Courses completed
2. Teaching Experience
3. Foreign Languages
5. Integrative Study or Thesis (i.e., proposal submitted, sections completed)
6. Other (i.e., participation in colloquia or professional meetings, publications, preaching, etc.)

I anticipate the following progress in the coming academic year [dates]:

[Give a description of what progress is expected in the above areas.]

[Signature of student]

[Signature of advisor]

Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary

Approval of Proposal

for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology (S.T.M.)

STUDENT NAME: _____

TENTATIVE THESIS TITLE: _____

PRIMARY ADVISOR: _____

Approved: (signature) _____ Date: _____

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER: _____

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER: _____

STM COMMITTEE:

Chair signature: _____ Date: _____

(THESIS TITLE IN CAPS)

A THESIS SUBMITTED BY

(Student Name)

TO THE FACULTY OF

LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SOUTHERN SEMINARY
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
MASTER OF SACRED THEOLOGY

(date: use month and year only)