

MASTER OF THEOLOGY DEGREE

PROGRAM HANDBOOK

Western Seminary—Portland, OR
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I. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROGRAM

The aim of this handbook is to acquaint you with the elements of the work leading to the Th.M. degree.

A. THE TH.M DEGREE IN RELATION TO OTHER DEGREES

Historically, the first standard professional degree for ministerial training has been the *Master of Divinity* (M.Div.). This program on a post-collegiate level is aimed at providing the student with the basic tools for professional competence in the communication of the Word of God, and with a vital framework of theology in which one can function as a Christian minister.

The *Master of Arts* (M.A.) degree is designed for students seeking specialized, graduate, theological education. Specifically at Western Seminary, the *Master of Arts in Exegetical Theology* (MAET) focuses upon graduate level education in the biblical and theological disciplines. This is an excellent academic program, the first step toward a teaching career, which, in the case of universities, seminaries, Christian colleges, etc., typically requires the Doctor of Philosophy degree.

The *Master of Theology* (Th.M.) degree has been viewed by theologians and educators as the first graduate theological degree. At Western Seminary the Th.M. program is designed for three kinds of people:

- students planning to pursue Ph.D. or Th.D. studies.
- pastors who realize that staying sharp academically and intellectually is essential to continued effective ministry.
- teachers intending to teach at Bible schools and colleges.

Our Th.M. program emphasizes three areas:

- *Academic excellence:* At every phase, our Th.M. program fosters the development of all the skills necessary for students to achieve a high level of academic success. Such skills include critical thinking, academic research, and scholarly writing. In addition, both coursework and research provide ample opportunities for students to hone and demonstrate their academic abilities.

- *Ministerial vitality:* Our Th.M. program stresses the tremendous value that the pursuit of good biblical and theological research has for the ministry of church, locally and globally. Consequently, in both coursework and research, students are continually challenged to address the ministerial significance of their academic pursuits.
- *Interdisciplinary interaction:* Recognizing the value of understanding and applying each of the various biblical and theological disciplines to any particular research task or ministerial issue, our Th.M. program encourages students to draw on the resources that each discipline provides in their research and coursework.

Historically, the Th.M. degree has required the M.Div. degree as its prerequisite. In 1997 the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) modified the requirements for the Th.M. degree so that students may now enroll in the Th.M. program with either the M.Div. or an academic M.A. Students desiring to enter the professional ministry (pastoral ministry, chaplaincy, evangelism and discipleship, etc.) must pursue the M.Div. degree. Students desiring to enter into a teaching career may choose to do either the M.Div. program or an academic M.A. program.

In either case, the Th.M. program becomes an important second step in furthering the development of exegetical ability, theological competency, research and writing proficiency, and teaching skills. A number of theological seminaries that offer the Doctor of Theology (Th.D.) degree require as prerequisites both the first professional (M.Div.) and the first graduate (Th.M.) degrees. Institutions that offer the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree do not generally require the Th.M. degree. However, the extra preparation beyond the M.Div. or M.A. program should prove invaluable in terms of providing opportunity for concentrated work in theological, biblical studies and ministerial studies and therefore pave the way for future advanced work. This is especially true for students with the M.A. degree.

Even for those who do not intend to pursue further advanced education, the Th.M. program offers extended academic and ministerial training essential to ongoing effective pastoral and teaching ministries. In the present structure of theological education, therefore, the Th.M. degree has a meaningful place in the preparation of Christian leadership. The major thrusts of graduate work involve sharpening the skills of written communication, the presentation of scholarly research, the enlargement of biblical, theological, and ministerial capacity and the application of these to professional tasks.

B. THE TH.M. DIRECTOR (PROGRAM DIRECTOR)

The director of the Th.M. studies serves as the general program consultant. The various details of the program, the assignment of faculty examiners and supervisors and other phases of the Th.M. career will be worked out in consultation with the director. Upon acceptance into this degree program, students must make an appointment with the program director to discuss curricular direction. It is their responsibility to check with the program director annually regarding any modification or change in the handbook.

As will become apparent through reading this handbook, the program director is the point person for most all of the components of the program. Among the director's responsibilities are;

- assessing students' Th.M. curriculum
- modifying the Th.M. Handbook
- registering students for Th.M. courses (and approving withdrawals)
- approving individualized studies
- approving research proposals and research products
- setting up oral comprehensive exams

It is the responsibility of Th.M. students to be in contact with the Th.M. director at all phases of their Th.M. program.

C. ACTIVE STATUS/WITHDRAWAL FROM THE PROGRAM

Those in the Th.M. program will be considered active students until the completion of their program whether or not studies are in progress or in abeyance. However, if a Th.M. student goes three consecutive semesters (including the summer term) without registering for a course, before taking another course the student will need to fill out a form indicating their intent to continue with the program and informing the school of any significant life changes. (NOTE: This does not apply to RES 602 - Thesis, for which continuing registration must be maintained once begun; see III.B). If withdrawal from the program is necessitated, the process begins in the Records Office. A letter stating the fact of one's withdrawal should be sent to the program director. Withdrawal from the program may result in loss of credit or the requirement of additional work.

II. THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM

A. TH.M. PROGRAM TRACKS

The Th.M. student can successfully complete the Th.M. program on one of two tracks: the thesis track and the non-thesis track.

The *non-thesis track* is designed for the student who is primarily interested in developing a breadth of exposure across a range of disciplines and/or research interests. Students participating in this track will have the opportunity to take a number of Th.M. seminars, electives, and individualized studies. In addition, these students will complete two guided research projects through which they will develop their research and writing skills as well as pursue multiple research interests.

The *thesis track* will be of particular interest to the student who wants to develop the research, writing, and critical thinking skills necessary to the production of a full Th.M. thesis. Through this thesis as well as the Th.M. coursework, students in this track will develop significant depth

in a particular biblical or theological field of study. This track will be particularly useful for students who are interested in preparing for further post-graduate study.

The coursework for both tracks comprises Th.M. seminars, electives, and individualized studies. Students must take a minimum number of Th.M. seminars (three in the thesis track and five in the non-thesis track); the remainder of the program is normally completed with elective courses and on special occasions in individualized studies.

Thesis Track

Th.M. Seminars	6 hours
Other Electives	12 hours
Research Methods (RES 6001)	1 hour
Thesis (RES 602)	6 hours
<i>Total</i>	<i>25 hours</i>

Non-Thesis Track

Th.M. Seminars	10 hours
Other Electives	12 hours
Research Methods (RES 600)	1 hour
Guided Research (RES 601)	2 hours
<i>Total</i>	<i>25 hours</i>

It should be understood that students cannot repeat the same courses for Th.M. credit which they have already taken for M.Div. credit.

Western has a working relationship with the Jerusalem University College in Israel that provides interested students with the opportunity for a cooperative degree program in the biblical studies major. A student may select up to eight (8) elective hours from among approved master's level courses at the College. The selection of such courses must be under the guidance of the director of Western Seminary's Th.M. program.

B. TH.M. SPECIALIZATIONS

The Th.M. program also offers a number of areas in which the Th.M. student can specialize. In doing so, the student will focus his or her coursework and research in a particular area and, by doing so, gain a greater understanding of and appreciation for that field of study. The areas of concentration are:

- Theological Studies (systematic, historical, and philosophical theology)
- Biblical Studies (Old Testament, New Testament)
- Ministerial Studies (pastoral theology)

Thesis track students will be required to choose one of the above disciplines as their area of specialization. These students must then complete at least two Th.M. seminars within that area of specialization and one Th.M. seminar from outside their area of specialization. In addition, thesis

track students will be expected to complete a thesis focusing on some aspect of their chosen field of study.

Non-thesis track students will also be encouraged to choose an area of specialization as a way of developing both depth and breadth in their Th.M. program. Those students who choose to develop such a specialization must complete at least three Th.M. seminars in their chosen field as well as at least two seminars from the other specializations. In addition, non-thesis track students must complete at least one hour of *Guided Research* in their specialization.

Prior to registering for the first semester of the Th.M. program, students must make an appointment with the Th.M. program director to discuss and choose the direction of their program, including an area of concentration (when desired) and the chosen topic of the thesis or product (if known).

C. TH.M. SEMINARS

As described in the previous sections, every Th.M. student is required to complete a number of Th.M. Seminars. These seminars will focus on making sure that the student has an adequate grasp of the basic methodological and fundamental concepts of a given discipline, as well as exposing the student to the most important contemporary developments, issues, and problems of that field.

In keeping with the nature of the program, these seminars will also encourage a high level of academic engagement. Consequently, each seminar will help students develop their researching, writing, and critical thinking skills through course projects, presentations, and class discussions.

Th.M. Seminars may be offered in any of the following areas (related specializations are in parentheses):

- Old Testament Seminar (biblical studies)
- New Testament Seminar (biblical studies)
- Systematic Theology Seminar (theological studies)
- Church History Seminar (theological studies)
- Pastoral Theology Seminar (ministerial studies)

Although each student must complete a minimum number of Th.M. seminars, students may choose to take more.

D. TH.M. ELECTIVES

Courses listed at the 600 level may be taken by students as Th.M. electives. Some of these classes may also be dual-listed as 500 level courses. In such cases, the 600-level course number will be used and a separate syllabus for Th.M. students will be prepared by the professor, which will include a significant amount of additional reading and class assignments; these will be in

keeping with the goals and competencies of the Th.M. program and tailored where possible to the particular interests of the Th.M. students.

As with the Th.M. Seminars, students are encouraged to select their Th.M. electives according to their desired concentration. For example, students concentrating in biblical studies are encouraged to take Th.M. electives in the areas of Old Testament, New Testament, and Biblical Literature. Likewise, students concentrating in theological studies are encouraged to take Th.M. electives in the areas of Systematic Theology, Church History, and Spiritual Formation. Note: This is not a program requirement, only a suggestion.

E. INDIVIDUALIZED STUDIES

Under normal circumstances Th.M. students are expected to take regularly scheduled course offerings, whether those be Th.M. Seminars or Th.M. electives. Under some circumstances, students are allowed to do individualized studies. Typically these courses are independent research projects under the direct guidance of a professor in the discipline; these are listed with the area of research (e.g., THS, OTS) followed by the number 680. A 3.4 cumulative GPA is required to take an individualized study; all such courses must be approved by the program director. There is a limit of one individualized course per semester.

Students wishing to undertake such a study must first make an appointment with the program director at least eight weeks prior to the commencement of the course to discuss the nature of the intended research. A typed proposal outlining the research that will be pursued must be presented at that time. Upon approval, the program director will provide a faculty advisor to guide the study; a student's request for a particular advisor will be followed whenever possible.

A second step is to make an appointment with the professor to prepare a syllabus for the 680 course. This syllabus must include a course description, goals and objectives, requirements (including reading, paper/s, etc.), course content and schedule, and how the grade is to be determined. Guidelines for syllabi that meet institutional standards are available for consultation. Copies of the syllabus should be supplied to the program director, the professor, the Office of Academic Affairs, and the Records Office (at the time of registration). One copy should be kept for the student's records.

Normally arrangements should be completed and approved prior to the beginning of the semester in which it will be undertaken. In no case will approval be given for an individualized study beginning later than the second week of the semester.

Two hours of credit require spending a minimum of 105 hours in guided research. Hours spent in the actual conference meetings with the instructor at regular intervals during the semester are not credited toward meeting the 105-hour minimum requirement. In most cases, a 680 course requires the writing of a research paper. Students are expected to produce a quality of work that reflects scholarly research, clarity of presentation, and compositional skill worthy of graduate studies. Paper should be at least 5,000 words. The individual professors build their course with these in mind, but are free to add to this minimal standard.

F. GRADE LEVEL

Students must maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0 (B) during their studies in the Th.M. program.

G. ETS PARTICIPATION

The Th.M. program encourages participation at both national and regional meetings of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS). It especially encourages active participation through the reading of papers. This is possible at regional meetings for current Th.M. students and at both regional and national meetings for Th.M. graduates.

Presenting a paper at ETS is a significant step in developing the abilities of students as up and coming evangelical scholars, teachers, or pastor-scholars. The opportunity to present and then be critiqued by the best evangelical scholars, though intimidating, will sharpen the students' skills in both writing and communicating their findings. This also affords students the opportunity to identify themselves with the broader evangelical community and to make a significant contribution to the advancement of evangelical scholarship and the evangelical church.

III. THE THESIS AND GUIDED RESEARCH PROJECTS

A. GENERAL GUIDELINES

Ability to think constructively and to carry out a program of research must be demonstrated by the writing of an acceptable research project. In order to make a worthy contribution to the fund of theological knowledge, students should seek to choose a thesis subject that has produced several shades of opinion among scholars. The thesis should embody a well-researched position that can be ably defended by the student. Although there are guidelines governing the appropriate length of the research project, the quality of a project is better measured in terms of scholarly research, logical presentation, and literary quality.

Th.M. research projects will comprise new research conducted by the student during the course of the student's Th.M. program. Although such projects will be thoroughly researched, students should be careful to avoid any research or writing practice that might constitute plagiarism. Consequently, students should be careful (1) to identify and cite all direct quotations of another person's work (or your own work from another research project), (2) to cite all material that has been paraphrased from another source, and (3) to avoid using the general plan, outline, or form of another person's research. Should you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or when appropriate citation is necessary, please consult the plagiarism resources on the Th.M. program web page.

Normally, research projects will be written while students are in residence. Should they desire to complete the research in a non-resident capacity, students may do so only with permission of the program director. They will need to provide justification for the request, indicating availability of adequate library facilities suitable for the intended research.

Guidelines for the proper formatting of research projects are found in *Western's Academic Paper and Doctoral Product Writing Standards and Recommendations*.

Research projects in their final draft must be worthy of a minimum grade of B.

1. GUIDED RESEARCH PROJECTS

Students in the non-thesis track will complete two hours of guided research in one of the areas of Th.M. specialization. Students will normally satisfy this requirement by completing two 1-credit guided research projects. (Under certain circumstances the student may request permission to complete one 2-credit research project; the requirements for such a project would need to be adjusted accordingly.) These guided research projects will result in a quality academic research paper of at least 6,000 words and no more than 8,000 words (including footnotes/endnotes and appendices, but excluding bibliography).

2. THESES

Students in the thesis track will complete an acceptable thesis of at least 25,000 words and no more than 40,000 words (including footnotes/endnotes and appendices, but excluding bibliography), for which six credit hours are granted.

3. OTHER PRODUCTS

On a requested basis, and with the approval of the program director, an academic product may be submitted in place of a thesis. The product maintains rigorous academic standards, differing from the thesis in form only. It deals with a significant subject area of academic research, is credited in the same way as the thesis, and requires the satisfactory completion of RES 600. It may assume one of many forms: a course of learning, book, manual, model, audio-visual package, multi-media, indexed and annotated bibliography, etc. The product's length, nature, and subject matter are to be determined in consultation with the program director and product examiners.

In all cases where a product is selected rather than a thesis, and the product takes a form other than prose, a written description of the product (including at least introduction, purpose, goals, methods, use, significance, and abstract) must be prepared and submitted as part of the final product. This brief written description must be prepared in acceptable thesis form and be suitable for filing in the seminary library. One copy of the product will become the property of the seminary.

Except for any matter that peculiarly relates to a product as over against a thesis, all other details of declaration of title, calendar, examiners, proposal, first draft, final draft, and abstract, as noted above, apply.

B. THE RESEARCH PROCESS

- **Research Methods Course (RES 600).** All Th.M. students should enroll in RES 600 as soon as possible. This class will provide instruction in the basic research and writing skills necessary for successful completion of the program. In addition, the course will instruct students on how to construct a research proposal. By the end of the course, students will have completed the first draft of the research proposal that they will need to continue the research process.
- **Research Proposal.** When students are ready to begin their research project, they need to submit a research proposal detailing their chosen topic, reasons for pursuing it, primary research question(s), basic argument, and an initial bibliography. Research proposals should normally be received no later than the second week of the semester in which the student intends to begin his or her research. Instructions for constructing the research proposal are covered in RES 600 and can be downloaded from the program website. The research proposal must be submitted to and approved by the program director.

The program director will then determine the appropriate faculty members to serve as research supervisor and examiner. The proposal will then be passed along to those faculty members for their approval. During the approval process, a research proposal will often go through several drafts as the student makes changes in response to feedback from the director, supervisor, and examiner. This is a normal part of the process and should result in a more clearly defined research topic, which will in turn make for a better and more easily completed research project.

If at any time the direction of the research is substantially modified, the proposal must be revised, resubmitted, and approved by the program director, the research supervisor, and the examiner.

- **Thesis calendar.** Students will receive a calendar of due dates after they submit the “Application to Initiate Thesis/Dissertation” form. This calendar establishes due dates from proposal submission through consignment of the final draft to both readers and the Academic Dean.

NOTE: It is the responsibility of students to meet deadlines. Failure to meet deadlines marked by an asterisk will necessitate delay of program completion and graduation.

- **Registering the research.** Once the research proposal has been approved, students may register for the appropriate course (RES 601 for guided research projects; RES 602 for theses).

Theses require six credits altogether and, once a student has registered for RES 602, he or she must remain continuously enrolled (excluding summers) until the thesis has been completed. In other words, if you register for one credit of RES 602 in the fall semester, you *must* register for at least credit in the spring. And if thesis is not complete at the end of the spring term, you *must* register for at least one more credit during the summer term. This will continue until the thesis is complete. Under those rare circumstances where a

student need to take a leave of absence from the program after beginning the thesis (or 2-credit guided research project), the student must notify the program director in writing of his or her intention and the student will be required to pay a continuing registration fee to maintain his or her active status in the program.

The 1-credit guided research projects must be completed in one semester unless the student has requested and received an academic extension. (Under those circumstances when a student has received permission to complete a 2-credit research project, the student must either finish the project in one semester or remain continuously enrolled in RES 601 until the project has been completed).

- **First draft.** The due dates for the first draft are determined by the research supervisor in consultation with the student and then filed with the program director. A copy of this first draft should be submitted supervisor and the program director. Students should also keep a copy. The form and typing of this first draft should approximate closely the final draft (with the exception of quality of paper) and conform to the thesis standards in Western's *Academic Paper and Doctoral Product Writing Standards and Recommendations*.

Upon completing the reading of the first draft, the research supervisor will return the draft to the student. Thesis drafts will be returned to students no later than one month after they are received; guided research drafts should be returned within two weeks. In most circumstances, the draft will be returned to the student with notations indicating a number of corrections, changes, or additions that must be made. The student may then rewrite the draft and resubmit it. Once the draft has been approved by the research supervisor and the program director, the student may proceed with preparation of the final draft.

- **Format check of final draft (*theses only*).** An essential step before submitting the final draft of the thesis is the format check. After completion of all revisions of content, the thesis should be turned in to the Office of Academic Affairs. A thorough check of all form and style will be carried out in accordance with the guidelines set forth in Western's *Academic Paper and Doctoral Product Writing Standards and Recommendations*. Problems with the format of the thesis will be marked, and corrections must be made before permission will be granted to submit the final copy.

Upon completion of these corrections, the student should submit a final draft of the thesis to the program director, the research supervisor, and the examiner, as well as to the Office of Academic Affairs. The Office of Academic Affairs will conduct another format check.

- **Final copy (*theses only*).** The final copy should conform to this corrected draft which the research supervisor and program director approved and which passed the format check. It is prepared on paper of sixteen to twenty pound weight and 25 to 50 percent rag content. Erasable paper is not acceptable. Use Greek or Hebrew characters rather than transliteration if there is more than incidental use of original language. This draft must be submitted on or before the scheduled calendar date.

If possible, the final library copy will be a photocopy done by a professional printer on the prescribed bond paper. However, either a laser printer or a good letter-quality printer is acceptable. Use of a nine-pin dot matrix printer is not acceptable. The final copy may be prepared in one of two ways:

- Normally students will use a word processor for the preparation of their final draft. In this case the thesis must be printed on a laser printer with either Courier or Times New Roman typeface in 11 or 12 point type. If students use an ink jet printer, they should submit a professional quality photocopy for the library copy. Dot matrix printers are not adequate for the final draft and will not be accepted.
- If a typewriter is used, it must be 10-12 pitch (10-12 characters per inch), using a carbon ribbon or a new silk ribbon. Any questions regarding the acceptability of the form or type style should be taken to the program director or the academic affairs office.

The thesis should be placed in a stationery-type box and a copy of the thesis title page attached to the top of the box. Students should identify their personal copies if they choose to have copies bound for personal use. The Office of Academic Affairs will conduct one last review of form and style. Verification of all requirements is essential for certification of the degree. Copies of the verification form will be sent to the Records Office and to the student.

At the time of registering for RES 602, the student will be given a "Processing Record for Thesis/Product" form. This form must be completed and taken to the Business Office, where fees must be paid, prior to the due date of the final draft. The form makes note of the library processing fee that covers the binding of the library copy for circulation and two microfiche copies, one for the library reference collection and one for the student. It also provides for binding fees for personal copies. If so desired, a form for a request of copyright for the thesis may be obtained. When all thesis processing fees are paid, the Business Office will forward the form to the library.

- **Abstract (*theses only*).** An abstract of the thesis (maximum 200 words or one page) must be submitted with the final copy of the thesis. This will be bound with the library copy. In addition, two copies of a 1,000-word abstract are to be furnished to the program director two weeks prior to the oral examination.
- **Final Grade.** After the student has submitted his or her final draft and gone through an oral defense of the research during the oral examination, a final grade will be awarded for the research project. The examiner will propose a grade for the project, which will then be sent to the program director for approval. The program director, however, shall have the right and responsibility to make the final determination of the student's grade in consultation with the examiner and the research supervisor. If for any reason the program director is unable to assign the final grade, the program director will designate another faculty member to serve in this capacity.

C. RESEARCH ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Throughout the research process the *student* will be solely responsible for ensuring that all of the research steps have been completed properly and in a timely manner. In addition, although the student will receive faculty guidance throughout the process, the student shall be solely responsible for the quality of the research project and for the final grade that is awarded to the project. This means that the student is responsible for making sure that *all drafts* submitted are well-written and carefully proofed. The student can expect feedback from faculty members on the quality of the research and the clarity of the presentation, but should not expect to rely on faculty supervisors and examiners as proof-readers.

The primary role of the *Th.M. director* in the research process is that of advisor and guide. The program director shall be available to the student for consultation regarding the thesis topic, the specifics of the research proposal, and any of the details involved in successfully completing the research process. The program director, in consultation with the student insofar as possible, will also be responsible for assigning a research supervisor and an examiner for the student's research project. Finally, the program director shall be responsible for the final approval of the research proposal, the research project itself, and the determination of the grade awarded the research project.

The *research supervisor* will be primarily responsible for advising the student with respect to the direction of the research and the construction of the research project. The research supervisor shall read and comment on the student's research proposal, helping the student create a viable and clearly defined research project. The supervisor shall also read and comment on the student's first draft. In both cases, the supervisor will make helpful notes and observations for guiding the student. Although both proposal and first draft will frequently need to go through more than one revision, the research supervisor shall have the right to limit the number of revisions that he or she is willing and/or able to consider. Although the quality of the final product is the responsibility of the student, the research supervisor shall endeavor to ensure that the student has received the guidance necessary to the construction of a quality research project. Finally, the research supervisor shall be responsible to notify the program director in the event that there is any problem with the progress of the student's research, the quality of the student's research project, or any other situation that might prevent the student from successfully completing the program.

The *examiner* shall be primarily responsible for (1) commenting on and approving the initial research proposal; (2) reading and commenting on the final draft of the research project; and (3) proposing a final grade to be assigned to the research project. On both the research proposal and the final research project, the examiner shall make notes and observations as necessary for critiquing the student's research and presentation, as well as to sharpen the student's understanding and guide his or her future research. As much as possible, the examiner should not be consulted or involved at other points in the process so that he or she can retain a sufficient degree of objectivity.

Under certain circumstances, it may be appropriate for the program director to serve as the research supervisor as well. In these situations, the program director shall assume the roles and responsibilities of both positions. The program director, though, will not normally serve as the

research examiner on research projects.

Although all of the faculty involved in a student's research project will endeavor to be accessible to the student, students should not presume that their examiners will be available for consultation during the summer months. Also, if students do not complete their research and writing in a timely manner, they should recognize that their assigned supervisors and examiners may not continue to be available as needed due to sabbatical leaves or other assignments. Satisfactory completion of the program requires final acceptance of the thesis by the program director, the research supervisor, and the examiner.

IV. COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

After completion of the research project, during the last semester of matriculation, students will take an oral comprehensive examination over their major courses in the Th.M. program. In addition, students will be examined with reference to their research project. The questions shall be limited to the substance of the thesis or guided research project(s), clarification of positions taken, and an analysis of the basic knowledge of the subject area. The faculty committee that administers this examination shall be composed of at least three members, one of whom shall be the research examiner. In most cases the program director will be present as well. Should the program director not be available, another faculty member should be appointed to serve as the moderator of the oral examination. The content of the examination is structured on the basis of the courses students took in completing the Th.M. program. The program director is responsible for selecting faculty members and for informing the students as to the members of their examining committee.

No oral comprehensive examination will be scheduled at a time other than during the stated academic terms of the school year. Scheduling will be subject to the availability of the examining committee. Students are expected to accommodate themselves to this scheduling.

One of four possible grades will be granted on the oral examination:

- *Pass with distinction*, which indicates that the student demonstrated superior knowledge of the course content and persuasively defended the thesis or product
- *Pass*, which indicates that the student did a credible job in discussion of the course content and in defense of the thesis or product
- *Pass with qualification*, which indicates that some inadequacies were detected either in one portion of the exam or in both (in this case, the examining committee will assign remedial work for the student to complete; this may consist of additional reading, another revision of the thesis or product, etc.)
- *Fail*, which indicates that the student did an inadequate job on this portion of the Th.M. program. Failure to pass the comprehensive examination may necessitate postponement of graduation for a minimum of one semester. A subsequent retake may be scheduled at a time mutually convenient to the administration and the student, but after the beginning of the following semester. Only one retake is permitted. Failure in the second examination will terminate the program.

Students will receive oral notification of their grade by the examining committee chairman on the day of the exam. (The chairman will notify, as well, the director of the Th.M. program if he is not present at the oral examination.) Written notification by the Director of Admissions and Records Office will follow.

V. STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS

A. NORMAL REQUIREMENTS

Graduation requirements are listed in the catalog. The work for the degree must be completed within three years of initial registration.

B. SPECIAL SCHEDULING

If extremely difficult or extenuating circumstances occur such that students cannot finish the program within the designated three-year period, they may submit a petition to the Administrative Committee through the Th.M. program director for an extension of time. This extension will be limited normally to one year. The petition must be filed in the third academic year from the time of initial registration.

Missionaries interested in the program may contact the program director and special academic schedules can be set up to permit those qualified to begin the program.

VI. GRADUATION IN ABSENTIA

All graduating students are required to participate in the commencement exercises. Graduation in absentia will be permitted only by petition on the basis of extenuating circumstances.