

# **MASTER OF THEOLOGY**

**(M.Th.)**

## **STUDENT HANDBOOK**

**Advanced Degree program offered by Vineyard Harvester Bible School and Seminary**

This handbook is intended to aid students and faculty involved in the Master of Theology in Bible and Biblical Studies.

### **PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM**

The purpose of the degree of Master of Theology is to prepare persons for the ministry by combining rigorous academic and theological.

### **REGISTRATION**

Participation in the M.Th. program begins with registration for the first courses to be taken. Registration for these courses as well as for each succeeding component of the program is the responsibility of the student, and it must be accomplished according to instructions issued by the school in which the student is registered.

Normally, course registration follows consultation with the student's advisor, who is assigned upon admission from the faculty of the school in which the student is enrolled.

### **PROGRAM PROCEDURES**

#### **Advising**

When a student is admitted to the M.Th. program, a faculty member of the school will be assigned as the student's initial academic adviser. The adviser will assist the student in planning his/her program of studies. The student's primary link with the school is the adviser. The student is required to consult the adviser at least once each semester for approval of course selection and to discuss progress in the program, any questions or difficulties the student has with the program and his/her anticipations and plans for continuation and completion of the program.

The adviser will serve in a consultative manner throughout the student's time in the program, giving help regarding course selection, scheduling, and progress along the way – normally in response to the student's initiative. The adviser is not expected to seek the student out to check on progress or to initiate meetings or conferences. Rather, the student is expected to initiate conferences with the adviser as such conferences may be needed.

## **The Advisory Committee**

The advisory committee consists of three persons. The student's adviser serves as the committee chairperson. The advisory committee continues to function in an advisory capacity throughout the execution of the Master's Thesis.

## **Grading**

Students must complete the overall program of study with an average grade of "B" or better. A grade below B- in any of the core courses of the program will be a signal to the M.Th. committee to review and take action with respect to the student's continuance in the program. When assigned work is not completed during the prescribed period, a grade of "incomplete" may be given by the professor. The grades of "S" for satisfactory and "U" for unsatisfactory work are used in evaluating the concluding Master's Thesis.

## **Transfer of Credit**

1. In planning the student's program with her/his adviser or M.Th. program director, a student may request credit for work done prior to entry under the following guidelines. The work must have been done at graduate level within the past five years. A grade of B or better must have been given for the course. The student must be able to show that the work is relevant to the M.Th. program and that the course work was not credited toward a degree which was received.
2. A limit of 9 semester hours is placed upon any work done at other institutions. The number of credits to be allowed within this limitation is, in each instance, subject to the approval of the Dean of Academic Affairs.

## **Guidelines for Progress in the Program**

There is a time limit of six years for completion of the M.Th. program. It is theoretically possible to complete the program within two years if a student can devote full-time to it. An extension of one year for completion of the program may be granted when, in the judgment of the student's adviser and the M.Th. committee, unavoidable circumstances have impeded the student's progress and there is a

realistic and likely prospect of completing the degree within the additional year. Students must have completed a satisfactory first draft of a significant portion of their Master's Thesis in order to be considered for an extension of the program deadline.

Students whose progress in the degree program is reviewed by the M.Th. committee and found to be unsatisfactory according to the minimum expectations noted above, with the concurrence of the student's adviser and the M.Th. director, may be recommended for termination to the advanced studies committee of the school. That committee will make the final decision on the termination of any student. When progress is not satisfactory but termination is not immediately recommended, the student must, upon recommendation of the adviser, secure from the M.Th. committee approval of a plan for remedial work sufficient to meet the minimum expectations stipulated for the following year.

## **COMPONENTS OF THE PROGRAM**

**Thirty-six (36) semester hours** of academic work are required for the Master of Theology degree. There are five (4) basic components to the program:

1. Twenty-two credit hours in Biblical Studies.
2. Five credit hours in Ministry.
3. A three-hour Research class.
4. A Master's Thesis of six credit hours.

## **PROGRAM OF STUDIES**

The program of studies is intended to assist the student:

- To gain an advanced understanding of theological and theoretical concepts appropriate to the ministry;
- To learn under qualified supervision the practice of these concepts in ministry.
- To promote professional integration of theory and practice;
- To design and execute a research project appropriate to his/her professional practice, which will give evidence of his/her creative ability to contribute to his/her practice of ministry.

## **The Research Project and Master's Thesis**

### **The Proposal**

After a year of courses has been successfully completed a student may present a Master's Thesis proposal to the M.Th. Committee. The student is responsible for

getting the Master's Thesis proposal which should already have been approved by his/her advisory committee to members of the M.Th.

Each Master's Thesis proposal is to be approved by the student's advisory. The purpose of the review of each Master's Thesis proposal by the M.Th. committee is to assure the relevance of the research.

The content of the proposal shall include the following – usually in this order:

1. Statement of the problem.
2. The significance of the problem and why the author is concerned with it.
3. A brief survey of previous research and relevant literature.
4. Thesis or major contention.
5. Definition of principal or problematic terms.
6. Conclusions and implications of the Master's Thesis

## **The Master's Thesis**

The Master's Thesis constitutes the concluding and most comprehensive component of the student's M.Th. program. It should grow out of a concern within an area ministry which directly affects the student's particular ministry. It is designed to demonstrate the student's ability to engage in professionally-oriented research and to utilize his/her ability in bringing theological and other theoretical knowledge to bear upon the work of the ministry.

The Master's Thesis should be carried out in close cooperation with the student's adviser and with the consultation of his/her advisory committee. The student is strongly encouraged to consult with his/her .

While Master's Thesis may vary greatly in subject matter and organization, the following elements will be expected in all of them:

1. The research issue – the problem, or area of inquiry. A detailed exposition of the issues addressed by the Master's Thesis.
2. Implications of the student's work for the student's future ministry and for the field of pastoral care and counseling.
3. Bibliography of written material and other resources employed in the Master's Thesis.

## **Criteria for the Evaluation of the Master's Thesis**

The Master's Thesis will be evaluated in terms of its demonstration of:

1. the ability to generate and explore an interesting and useful thesis in the field of ministry;
2. an adequate understanding of the contextual factors which are directly or indirectly related to that thesis;
3. scholarly competence in the academic disciplines relevant for the research and Master's Thesis;
4. the ability to integrate the theory and practice of ministry;

These criteria allow for a broad range of Master's Thesis projects. The student is encouraged to explore a topic which has personal importance for his or her ministry but which can also contribute more generally to the understanding of a dimension of the church's ministry.

### **Final Procedures**

1. The original and all copies of the Master's Thesis must be on high quality bond paper of twenty-pound weight. It is to be typewritten or printed on a letter quality or laser printer.
2. In all other respects, students shall follow the style and format rules of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, which can be accessed on the internet at:

<http://el.iauq.ac.ir/assets/subdomains/rahbar/file/APA%206th%5B1%5D.pdf>

or a hard copy can be purchased from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

3. The student's adviser will sign all final copies of the Master's Thesis to indicate approval of the advisory committee.