



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*
 - GTU *Master of Arts Program 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
 - GTU MA
 - DSPT MA (Theology)

- **Degree Requirements, e.g. DSPT MA (Theology)**

- 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
 - Consortial requirement [GTU Common MA only] – two courses outside home school
- Electives build upon core requirements. When choosing electives, consider:
 - Selecting topics that help you explore area(s) of interest related to thesis
 - Area of concentration (at least four courses from the area), at least two are **4000-level** (know the [nomenclature for course listings](#))
 - An SRC, 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
 - DEADLINE for GTU students: *before* forming thesis committee
 - RESOURCES: GTU Library Reference Desk has sample/practice exams



Program Requirements

- **Research Readiness Paper Review (RRP Review)**

[for DSPT MA students only]

- 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 free up time otherwise committed to classroom & homework,
- thereby allowing you to create 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, 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.



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. N.B. GTU MA students must have a proposal approved and submitted along with the “[Thesis Proposal Form](#)” at least 90 days prior to the proposed date for the oral exam.
- 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. *Know the Big Picture*

Understand how component pieces work together

- required courses – distribution, area of concentration requirements, consortial
- 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" (GTU MA Handbook, p. 46) . . . 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 <u>final</u> 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)
- Six 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 <u>and</u> 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