



Master of Arts in Theology Comprehensive Examination Instructions

Introduction. The student who is candidate for the MA degree must successfully complete the **General** and **Departmental** comprehensive examinations. These two examinations are normally taken in the final year of study, are generally oral in nature and generally last one hour, unless otherwise indicated. **Every effort should be made to coordinate the completion of these examinations with the submission of the thesis or research papers.**

Registration and Fee. The student will register separately for each of these examinations no later than the date specified in the Academic Calendar. **Registration forms and attachments, when completed and signed, go directly to the Registrar.** At the time of registration, a fee will be charged to the student's account for each of the examinations. If the examination is not held, the fee will be refunded. If an examination is to be repeated, the student must register again to schedule the examination and will be assessed the related fee. An examination may be repeated only once. Form is located on the Forms and Instructions page of our website.

General Comprehensive. The examination is conducted according to the following process:

- The student will prepare/submit by the published deadline the special Degree Examination Registration form to the Registrar and will attach the required bibliography list for use in the examination, developed as follows:
 - a list of the courses completed or to be completed by the end of the semester and a list of theological publications (books and articles) prepared as follows:
 - a list of that includes two (2) bibliographical entries from the faculty-approved bibliography for each of the eight (8) core course in the MA program, completed or to be completed by semester's end.
- The student must select four (4) additional entries from the courses completed in the core or designated elective area. Entries that are not selected from the faculty-approved bibliography should be of an appropriate theological level and cannot include introductory textbooks, popular presentations or primary texts like books of the Bible, Conciliar documents and encyclical letters. Articles and chapters of books should be at least twenty (20) pages in length.
- Student will review the proposed list of publications with the academic advisor before submitting it with the Registration form.
- Comprehensive Examination Committee will review and approve the list, select the members of the examination board and notify the student of the selected examining faculty, ordinarily representing three distinct areas of theology.
- Examination board will conduct the examination, as follows:
 - Questions will use the list as background to guide the examination and to compose the initial set of questions
 - Questions will be limited to those arising from the bibliography and courses, but also may be appropriately integrative.
- Examination Board Chair will guide the examination, apportion time for questions, lead the grade discussion and communicate the grade in writing to the Registrar for posting to the student's official academic record. The examination is graded: Pass with Distinction, Pass or Fail.

Departmental Comprehensive. This examination is conducted according to the process and to the unique requirements specified by the particular department faculty, as outlined below.

- *General Process:*

- Student must prepare/submit the special Degree Examination Registration form to the Registrar.
 - After registration, student will contact the appropriate department chair and arrange a date for the examination to be held and to clarify the specific examination requirements as outlined in this guidance.
 - Department will conduct the examination as appropriate and report the grade in writing to the Registrar for posting to the student's official record. The examination is graded: Pass with Distinction, Pass or Fail.
- *Church Law.* The examination lasts one hour. One-half hour is devoted to the thesis or research papers and related issues that the student has produced. The other half-hour is devoted to subject matter and sections of the Code of Canon Law that have been previously communicated to the student in time for preparation of the examination.
- *Ecclesiastical History*
 - The examination lasts one hour.
 - Within two weeks of the beginning of the semester in which the student intends to take the examination, the student should submit a written request to the Department Chair that includes a list of the courses taken in the ecclesiastical history, both required and elective including the instructors' names; the topic of the thesis or research papers and three suggested dates for the examination.
 - The request will be discussed at the next departmental meeting, but certainly before the mid-term break. The faculty will develop five questions from the background information submitted by the student and determine the examination date.
 - The student should then prepare to answer two of the five questions proposed by the department and should develop a short bibliographical essay or annotated bibliography to indicate the resources consulted. For the latter task, the student should consult the department faculty, as needed.
 - At least two weeks before the examination, the department should select two members to act as the examining board.
- *Moral Theology*
 - The examination lasts one hour.
 - The examination is done orally in which the students responds to a case constructed by a member of the department. The case revolves around the matter studies for the MA thesis. The student will receive the case three (3) days before the scheduled time of the examination in order to prepare a response of fifteen (15) to twenty (20) minutes long. The remainder of the hour is reserved for questions from the examiners and further clarification.
- *Sacred Scripture*
 - Student should use the following guide in preparing for the examination. It details the methodology and general areas to be included in the test, with special emphasis on a list of about twenty (20) major biblical themes, such as 'creation,' 'sin' and 'reconciliation.' Student should start preparing at least a year in advance of the expected examination.
 - Explain the basic methodology and scope of form and redaction criticism, source criticism and literary analysis as well as the most important aspects of authorship, nature of the material and significance of the following: Pentateuch, Prophets, Wisdom literature, Synoptic Gospels, John and Paul.
 - Trace the development of the following themes in the Old and New testaments, using the most important biblical texts in order to discuss their application to contemporary theology: biblical anthropology; titles of "Son of man," "Messiah," "Son of God," and "Lord;" covenant; creation; discipleship; eschatology; faith; relationships between the Old and New Testaments; ministry; "reign of God;" revelation; sin; salvation including justification, liberation,

reconciliation and redemption; social justice; spirit; “Word of God;” the Law and prayer.

- Forty-eight (48) hours before the examination, the student is given one topic from the list of themes and is asked to prepare a twenty (20) minute presentation on that theme viewed from both the Old and New Testament.
- Two examiners then ask questions for about twenty (20) minutes each.
- *Spirituality*
 - Student should contact the Department Chair no later than January 25 of the year of expected graduation
 - Student will submit to the Department Chair: a list of the courses completed in the area of spirituality; a list of ten (10) books, monographs or articles important to the study of spirituality, including some key resources used in the student’s thesis; a brief two-page, double-spaced statement of the student’s focus in spirituality; three possible examination dates (no later than April 15).
- *Systematic Theology*. Either of the following are possible options:
 - A one-hour discussion with two faculty members on the thesis or research papers
 - A twenty (20) minute *lectio coram* before two faculty members followed by a discussion of the material for about 40 minutes. Assisted by the thesis/papers director, the student prepares three major areas of systematic theology, such as “Christ and Grace” or “Christ and the Church.” Forty-eight (48) hours before the examination, the student is told which of the three topics will be the basis for the *lectio coram*.
- *Word and Worship*
 - *Lectio coram* is the examination format.
 - Includes a twenty (20) minute lecture in which the student presents the topic, goal, methodology and results of the thesis or research papers, followed by forty (40) minutes of questions from the Departmental faculty.