

FORMAT FOR THE BACHELOR OF THEOLOGY THESIS

Introduction

The Bachelor of Theology thesis is a ministry-related scholarly work for which you earn three credit hours. It is the culmination of study for the Bachelor of Theology degree. As such, the final document should demonstrate your development in a number of areas:

- The ability to write in a clear and scholarly manner in either English or French
- The ability to evaluate critically the literature relevant to your interests
- The ability to ask significant ministry questions and then to seek answers to those questions
- The self-discipline to work without direct supervision in conducting extensive independent study, in consultation with the thesis mentor

Enrollment in and satisfactory completion of the thesis is mandatory for all students who wish to complete the BTh degree.

The BTh Thesis

The BTh thesis is the product of a mature and ministry-experienced student. As such, expectations for the content and style of the thesis are high. It demonstrates your ability to relate the theological and biblical principles you have studied to the practice of ministry. It demands those writing and research skills required of scholars and leaders in ministry. The following details are guidelines for completion of the thesis.

Length

The overall length of the thesis should be limited to fifty pages in the body of the document. This limit forces you to focus sharply on only one research question. As a result, the literature review is limited in scope, and you must write in a concise and expressive manner.

Literature Review

Both the scope of the thesis and the literature review must be focused and concise. You must demonstrate a solid grasp of the literature, while clearly demonstrating the relevance of the literature selected for inclusion in the thesis.

Field Research

Field research is not required for completion of the BTh thesis. If it is used, field research such as questionnaires or interviews must have direct bearing on the question being addressed and must correspond with the results of the literature review. Field research must have the approval of the mentor, and the student must bear all related costs.

Evaluation

The thesis must be submitted to the mentor on the dates designated at the beginning of your final semester of study. The mentor will judge its acceptability as a scholarly work in reference to three criteria:

- Content (literature review, synthesis, conclusion, etc.)
- Style (sentence and paragraph construction, grammar, spelling, style format)
- Ministry relevance (Does the thesis contribute to your readiness to do effective ministry and to pursue independent self-directed study in the future?)

A thesis that does not meet the above requirements must be revised until it earns approval.

Steps to Completing the BTh Thesis

The Thesis Topic Proposal

There are four steps in presenting a topic proposal:

1. Consult with the Academic Dean concerning possible topics and obtain a Proposal Approval Form.
2. Write out an initial proposal and bring the completed form to the Academic Dean for approval. At that time the Dean will appoint a thesis mentor. The mentor will work with you throughout the thesis-writing process.
3. With your mentor, continue to explore and refine the topic idea. This exploration will normally involve an open sharing of ideas, interests, and concerns related to ministry, with the goal of narrowing the topic to one that will work well within the constraints of the thesis. The mentor will then sign the Proposal Approval Form.
4. Provide one copy of the signed form for the Academic Dean and one for the mentor, and retain the original.

The Proposal Approval Form

The specific elements in the Proposal Approval Form include the following:

- Identification of the thesis topic
- Background information: an explanation of how you became interested in the topic, in reference to personal concerns and ministry relevance, and why others might be interested in this topic
- Justification: a brief statement of the purpose of the study
- A list of resources and specification of the methods that will be used in investigating the topic. Normally this will be limited to library research, though field research may be included.

The Proposal Approval Form should be submitted as early in the semester as possible, since modifications may need to be made in it that affect the direction of the thesis research. You should not assume the first proposal will be acceptable.

The Content of the Thesis

Often, master's theses and doctoral dissertations follow a five- to six-chapter format, with emphasis placed on methodology and hypothesis testing. However, a three-chapter format is recommended and described here. This should be adequate for most BTh theses. If there is sufficient rationale, an additional chapter may be created, but overall length must not exceed the fifty-page limit.

Approval Sheet

Each thesis must provide a standard approval sheet as the first page of the thesis following the title page. In its final form, the thesis must be signed by all academics involved in approving the document.

Table of Contents

The thesis must provide a detailed table of contents in which the various sections of each chapter, the bibliography, appendixes, etc. are listed with their respective page numbers.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The approved proposal will, with modification and expansion, become the first of three chapters in the thesis. It should not exceed seven pages of text. Any bibliographic references attached to the proposal should be incorporated into the final thesis bibliography.

Chapter 2: Content and Analysis

This chapter is the heart of the thesis. Here the literature is reviewed, analyzed, and synthesized. The chapter should move from the broad and general to the narrow and specific,

as the focus of the thesis becomes increasingly clear. You must demonstrate, both in the quality and quantity of sources cited, a command of the literature. You must challenge erroneous ideas in the literature and identify the mainstream position of a majority of sources, if such exists. You should pay attention to those points about which authors agree and disagree, and why they agree or disagree.

You should first organize or group the literature in the specific sub-areas within your topic, then review the literature according to these areas. Extensive quotations from the literature should be avoided. Quoted material should be so explicit and appropriate to the study that you find that the quote is the best way to describe that author's work.

Chapter 2 should not exceed thirty-three pages.

Chapter 3: Conclusion

The final chapter of the thesis is a summary and extension of the previous chapter. It allows you to briefly overview the study's findings in two to three pages. This summary then serves as the foundation to the application of your findings to your ministry context.

In essence, this chapter explains why the findings are important and what you intend to do with them as you continue in the ministry. You may also address the personal impact of the findings on your life, spiritually and intellectually.

The chapter may conclude with suggestions for future research. Chapter 3 should not exceed ten pages.

Bibliography

A complete bibliography of works actually summarized, paraphrased, or quoted in the thesis must be presented following chapter 3. The acceptable format is described in the *PAThS Form and Style Guide*. For further help, consult the seventh edition of Kate Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*.

Appendixes

Each supportive document (such as a table, chart, etc.) should be included in an individually lettered or numbered appendix (for example, Appendix A) at the end of the thesis. Each appendix should be listed on a separate line in the table of contents. Each must have a clear identification of its content on the first line of the appendix document.

Style Sheet

Style Manual

The approved style manual for the BTh thesis is the *PATHS Form and Style Guide*. Refer to this guide to ensure that you used the accepted formatting, style, and punctuation. Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, seventh edition, gives further style guidelines.

Paper

A good-quality white paper, either A4 (80 g) or US letter size (20 lb) paper should be used for the thesis.

Presentation Format

The thesis must be typed on a computer, following the guidelines in the *PATHS Form and Style Guide*. You will submit to the mentor three copies: one on a CD; another as loose sheets of paper, in page order, without binding of any kind; and a third bound, to be graded and returned to you.

Margins

All of your margins are one inch for the thesis. Remember that you do NOT justify any college paper; instead, you have a “ragged” right margin, as in this document. This setting is called “Align Left.”

BTh PROPOSAL APPROVAL FORM

Student's name

Mentor's name

Thesis topic (in one sentence)

Background information

Resources

Student's signature _____ Date _____

Mentor's signature _____ Date _____

Approved by Academic Dean _____ Date _____