

CRISWELL COLLEGE THESIS GUIDELINES

A thesis option is available in several of the masters programs at Criswell College. The pursuit of a thesis is a multi-step process, and this process is outlined below.

- 1) The “Thesis Seminar” class (RES 602 – 3 semester credit hours) is a required course in the M.A. program in Jewish Studies. It is a required course as well for anyone else wishing to write a thesis. This course provides a study of strategies and resources for research and technical writing in the field of theology and biblical studies. The course includes advanced instruction in the use of a theological library and the preparation of a thesis proposal according to the standards of the latest edition of the *Criswell College Manual of Style* (see CC Catalogue). RES 602 is the prerequisite for enrolling in RES 603 “M.A. Thesis.”
- 2) During the semester the student is enrolled in RES 602, the student will be expected to produce a suitable thesis prospectus. This is a document that outlines what a student plans to do in regard to a major research investigation. It is to be prepared in view of eventual submission to a thesis advisor and then to the Academic Cabinet—for approval—before any work is initiated on a thesis *per se*. The prospectus is generally divided into three major sections:

- **Problem Statement**
- **Methodology**
- **Supporting Literature**

1. The **Problem Statement** section should include a full and detailed discussion of the problem under investigation. The following elements should be included:
 - (a) The setting, or the background, from which the investigation springs; i.e., the context in which the problem is found;
 - (b) The Problem *per se* section which spells out as clearly and fully as possible exactly what is to be investigated;
 - (c) The significance or relevance of the expected results from this particular investigation, and
 - (d) The hypothesis (i.e., Thesis statement); what, at this preliminary stage of the investigation, is the investigator’s “best guess” as to what will be the conclusion to the investigation.
2. The **Methodology** - or Research Design - section should include, most importantly, a discussion of the means by which the problem is to be investigated or resolved. For example is a biblical text problem to be explored exegetically or theologically? To make sense of the problem, what has to be explored or analyzed?

Assumptions, limitations, a proposed outline and the thesis title should also be included in this section.

3. The third big section of a proposal covers a discussion of the body of literature relevant to the investigation. This “review” of the relevant literature can take either of the two forms:
 - An annotated bibliography, or
 - A critical - pro and con - textual discussion, in essay form, of monographs as well as essay literature identified as contributing something to the topics, or issues, covered in the investigation.

- 3) During the semester in which the student is enrolled in RES 602, the student will be encouraged to seek out a thesis advisor. This faculty member must specialize in the student's major area of interest, and should be consulted in a preliminary way regarding his willingness to advise a thesis project. The student should share with the prospective advisor a formulation of a subject and a hypothesis (thesis statement) regarding the proposed investigation. The advisor will determine the feasibility of the proposed topic of investigation.
- 4) Once the prospectus is completed, and if a thesis is to be pursued, the prospectus along with a recommendation from the thesis advisor is to be submitted to the Academic Cabinet for approval and appointment of a three member Thesis Committee. The thesis advisor will become the Chairman of the Thesis Committee and will recommend to the Academic Cabinet the other two faculty members comprising the committee. Upon Academic Cabinet approval of the committee, the prospectus must then be submitted to and approved by the Thesis Committee.
- 5) The chair of the thesis committee has the responsibility to inform the thesis student of institutional policies and procedures as they relate to the use of people and other research matters for research purposes. Signatures from committee members, signifying approval of the topic, will be affixed to the Master's Thesis Prospectus form, which in turn will be placed in the student's file in the Registrar's Office.
- 6) Once the thesis prospectus has been approved by the Academic Cabinet, the student shall be allowed to register for RES 603 (three hours credit). During the semester enrolled in RES 603, the thesis will be written. The thesis style should adhere to the latest edition of the *Criswell College Manual of Style*, and be sixty (60) to eighty (80) pages in length total. The prospectus, minus the literature section, should be incorporated into the opening chapter of the thesis, constituting part of the Introduction.
- 7) The thesis committee is responsible for determining that the thesis is written in acceptable English, that it manifests an appropriate scholarly style, and that it meets the approved format.
- 8) The thesis should be submitted to the Thesis Committee no later than week twelve of the semester in which credit is to be expected, and the defense of the thesis is to be completed by week fourteen. If the thesis is not completed within the term in which the student is registered for RES 603, the student has the option of registering for the course a second semester (paying full tuition) in order to complete the writing and defense of the thesis. Credit will be given for the first semester with an "S" notation on the transcript, and the full credit of 3 hours will be entered for the second semester on the transcript upon completion of the thesis.
- 9) The defense process of the completed thesis is to be coordinated through the Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs. Upon successful defense of the thesis, the committee approval signatures will be affixed to the Thesis Defense Form, which will be placed in the student's file in the Registrar's Office. Recommendations made by the Thesis Committee must be addressed by the student prior to final signature approval of the committee.
- 10) At least one copy of the final corrected thesis manuscript must be submitted to the Wallace Library for binding and addition to the library collection. The fee for binding the library copy is \$60. Additional copies are \$60 each as well. Check with the Director of Library Services for submission and binding processes. A student's transcript and diploma will not be released until this graduation requirement is met.

THESIS STUDENT, CHAIR, AND COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

- The thesis committee will be composed of a chair (the major professor) and a minimum of two additional committee members with appropriate faculty credentials suitable for the thesis subject.
- The chair of the thesis committee has the responsibility to supervise the research, direct the writing, and ultimately, with the committee, approve the thesis in its final form. The chair assures that the thesis meets scholarly standards in content before distributing it to the other members of the thesis committee. The chair assists the academic administration in assuring that the form of the thesis is correct.
- The chair of the thesis committee will advise the student regarding registration for the thesis. Students must register for additional thesis hours each semester after the required minimum credit hours are met until a grade is earned. The grade of S, or in progress, will be reported until the thesis is completed. The grade scale of the College will be reported upon conclusion of the thesis. The student must submit a thesis prospectus form to the MA Degree Program person prior to starting the thesis.
- The thesis student should schedule an appointment with the academic administration to review the form of the thesis. The form review of the thesis should be scheduled after the content is in draft form and has been reviewed on a preliminary basis by the committee.
- An off-campus (outside) committee member may serve in addition to the chair (the major professor) and two committee members, if approved by the thesis committee chair and academic administration.
- The chair of the thesis committee has the responsibility to inform the thesis student of institutional policies and procedures as they relate to the use of people and other research matters for research purposes.
- The thesis committee is responsible for determining that the thesis is written in acceptable English, that it manifests an appropriate scholarly style, and that it meets the approved format.
- When the committee members are satisfied with the scope and quality of the thesis, they will sign the approval page. Signatures must be in black ink on all approval pages.
- The signatures of the thesis chair and the thesis committee members on the approval pages signify academic unit acceptance of the final document. Approval by the academic administration.