

Guidelines for Oxford and Rome Student Papers

Mechanics and Scope of Position Papers

I. Position Paper

Papers written for Oxford/Rome seminars should be composed as position papers, in which the student focuses on and develops a particular topic or theological/philosophical aspect that was covered in the week-long seminar. The topic should be developed through further research (cf. the scope of position papers, p.3).

The position paper should *not* be a summary of the tutor's syllabus. Students are expected to articulate, assimilate, expound upon and develop a topic or topics of interest through further documented research as stated above, using assigned readings as well as additional sources. Position papers must be between 2,500 and 3,000 words typed in Microsoft Word in order for the GTF faculty evaluator to incorporate suggestions and recommendations into the body of the paper.

a. APA / MLA

- i. Student should adopt either APA or MLA formatting tools and follow the correct use of such things as:
 1. Correct punctuation, grammar and spelling
 2. The correct insertion of direct and indirect quotations
 3. References, citations, footnotes/endnotes
 4. A reference page and bibliography page

b. Title Page

- i. Papers should include a title page (cf. model to be adopted by all students). The name and address of the Graduate Theological Foundation should appear at the top of the title page.
- ii. All papers are written for the Graduate Theological Foundation (not for Oxford or the *Centro*) from which the degree will be conferred.

c. Abstract

- i. Although there is no need to include an abstract for the position paper, many students like to include one. The abstract follows the title page and should have a header and a page number.
- ii. The abstract should be typed in block form and must not exceed 960 characters including punctuation and spaces. The abstract is in addition to the 2,500 to 3,000 required words.

d. Running Header

- i. Every page must be numbered (top right) and include a **running header**. The **running header** should start with page 1, which is the title page. In our highly technological/green world, the days are gone where a student or writer hands a

paper or manuscript to an instructor or publisher. Today, papers are emailed and then printed out. Consequently, it is important that students and writers identify and own their work; thus the need for a header protects the work of its author.

- ii. The **running head** should begin at the title page and for GTF purposes should consist of the title of the paper (not the title of the seminar) in all upper case. The title should be abbreviated in cases where it is long. The title of the paper should then conclude with a slash (/) followed by the first initial of the student's name, followed by the surname, all in upper and lower case.
- iii. An example of a running header might look like this: A STUDY OF SOUL / J. Smith with the page number with a right-side alignment.
- iv. Beginning on page two of the position paper, the words "running header" are omitted. For publication purposes, it may not be necessary for the student's/author's name to appear in the running header; however, for GTF's purposes it helps the instructor to keep the student's work together when the student's name is included.

II. **Submission of Position Papers**

a. **Office of the Provost**

- i. Students should submit position papers to the Office of the Provost at provost@gtfeducation.org, who will then forward the paper to the GTF faculty evaluator.
- ii. Position papers should be submitted one paper at a time. Students are asked to wait until feedback is given to them by the GTF faculty evaluator prior to the submission of subsequent papers. This will provide the student with the opportunity to incorporate any recommendations that the GTF faculty evaluator may make.

b. **GTF Faculty Evaluation**

- i. The student's position paper will be returned by the GTF faculty evaluator via the Office of the Provost. Papers will include the faculty evaluator's comments, recommendations and a grade. In addition, the student will receive a separate **Evaluation Form** with additional comments and recommendations.
- ii. In cases where the student is asked to rewrite the position paper, the GTF faculty evaluator will provide the student with clear reasons for the need for a rewrite, along with detailed recommendations. A rewrite and the opportunity for resubmission provides the student with another opportunity to improve on the paper.

III. **Writing a Position Paper**

a. **What is a Position Paper?**

- i. The first step for putting together a position paper is perhaps the most difficult part of writing a paper because it involves choosing a topic. Students should use the required reading from both Oxford and the *Centro* to gather their thoughts and to begin thinking about the topic or subject matter that will comprise their position paper(s). This should be undertaken even prior to the beginning of the seminars; thus along with seminar notes and the tutor's commentary, the student will have compiled a significant amount of information to begin to write his/her position paper(s) once the seminars have ended.
- ii. Once the topic or issue has been chosen, the student should draw upon the information that has already been gathered and in addition, begin to draw from additional scholarly resources from the contemporary praxis as well as from the classical scholarly texts depending upon the nature and scope of the student's subject matter.
- iii. A position paper focuses upon a particular point of view, which the student develops through readings and research, the student works toward proving his/her initial thesis. The position paper focuses upon convincing the student's audience that his/her point of view is not only worth considering, but in fact, makes a contribution to the subject matter under discussion. In addition, the incorporation of contrasting viewpoints presented in a clear, concise as well as a fair and objective manner enhances the strength of the subject matter as well as reinforcing the credibility of the study; thus the possibility for publication.

b. Organization of a Position Paper

- i. Once the student has chosen the topic, the subject matter is introduced by providing some background with regard to its relevance to the contemporary praxis, to the present state of the church/religion or to the student's present ministerial service. This type of description of the chosen subject or topic should also include the student's methodology in approaching and unpacking the particular issue(s) that encompasses the subject under discussion.
- ii. The next step in a position paper involves developing the topic or subject matter. This includes the discussion, examination, and perhaps the analysis of supporting arguments as well as the counter arguments and opinions, citing peer review journals and other forms of scholarly research for both the pro's and con's involved in the subject matter. Once again, it is important that the student's analysis is free of bias or prejudice in the presentation of the factual information that may conflict with the student's position or persuasion.
- iii. It is important for the student to refute counter viewpoints in a scholarly manner, drawing from personal views, perhaps contingent upon one's ministerial or professional experiences as well as from the student's scholarly research. Summary statements made by the student in his/her discussion of various viewpoints should be presented objectively in a manner that supports and reinforces the student's initial focus. Incorporating supporting evidence serves to strengthen the initial claims that the student makes concerning the importance and relevancy of the subject matter under discussion.

c. Conclusion/Summary Statements

- i. The conclusion/summary statements of the position paper must include a restatement of the subject matter /argument(s) under discussion. While it is important at this stage to provide the reader with a different way of looking at or thinking about the subject matter under discussion, the student must be careful not to introduce new information as part of his/her conclusion/summary statements.
- ii. It is good practice to include in the summary statements a reference to the first paragraph/opening statements as well as to the main points examined in the body of the paper.

d. Plagiarism

- i. It goes without saying, that academic honesty is not only a matter of personal integrity, it is also against the law to deliberately take another person's thought directly or indirectly and assign ownership to it either by signing one's name to the subject matter, or by failing to provide a clear reference to the source in question.
- ii. Students are encouraged to master either APA or MLA both of which provide clearly defined directives for the formatting of manuscripts, including the correct use of referencing researched materials that are incorporated into the position paper.