



Graduate Theological Foundation

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THE DOCTORAL THESIS

In conformity with the basis commitment of the Graduate Theological Foundation to serve advanced professional education, the doctoral thesis, as the culminating work of the highest academic degree, must make an original contribution to the field of knowledge of a specific discipline or area of inquiry. The thesis is shaped as a written work of original systematic research, which includes the substantive exposition of the theoretical basis and rationale of the subject, together with a demonstration of familiarity with the appropriate scholarly and professional literature in the field of inquiry.

THESIS PROPOSAL

The student must submit a thesis proposal to the GTF. This will be the first working document generated from the relationship between the student and the Thesis Supervisor. The proposal will include a brief description of the proposed thesis, a working title, and an exemplary bibliography. A form for this proposal is provided on the GTF website.

GUIDELINES

After completing all coursework, candidates undertake the research and writing of a doctoral thesis of 45,000-60,000 words (180-240 pages) in their field of specialization. It must be clearly a work of original academic scholarship making a contribution to the field of specialty. The thesis must be written in 12 point Times New Roman (or comparable) font, double-spaced and with the appropriate table of contents and bibliography.

The written form of the thesis is to be in the style of actual scholarly publications; that is, the thesis as finally submitted is to be capable of publication without being rewritten. The GTF standard for the traditional structuring of the doctoral thesis is explained in detail in the *Research Methodology* course, which is required for all students writing a thesis. The fundamental components of a traditionally-constructed doctoral thesis include (1) the statement of the problem, (2) review of the relevant literature, (3) articulation of the research methodology to be used, (4) presentation of materials and their analysis, (5) summary and relevance of the findings to the thesis with emphasis upon the “original” nature of the findings, and (6) a statement of the work yet to be done in the field of inquiry relevant to the thesis. A comprehensive bibliography of works cited within the body of the thesis is required.

There are several internationally recognized thesis styles acceptable in the academic community. The GTF encourages students to employ APA style, but will accept any of the internationally recognized styles, given that the student consistently employs the same style throughout the writing of the thesis. Those most commonly used but not required include Turabian, Chicago, MLA, APA, as well as others known and recognized universally.

SUPERVISION

Students select a faculty member of the GTF to serve as Thesis Supervisor. This enables the student to receive helpful and pragmatic evaluative feedback from a member of the faculty in the developmental process of producing the doctoral thesis. The role of the faculty Thesis Supervisor is responsive and suggestive. The faculty person is encouraged to limit feedback to pragmatically helpful hints and suggestions and not to attempt

any censorship of the thesis. The exercise of discretion with respect to time demands is very important for both the student and faculty member. The faculty Thesis Supervisor must give final approval of the student's work by submitting the Thesis Supervisor Report Form.

DOCTORAL COMMITTEE

Every student admitted into an academic doctoral program will be assigned a Doctoral Committee prior to the scheduling of the doctoral defense. The members of the committee are as follows

- Thesis Supervisor
- Two Faculty Readers
- Two Defense Panel members
- Defense Chair

These six individuals are not asked to agree with the observations or conclusions drawn by the doctoral candidate in the thesis, but the committee must finally concur that the thesis is worthy of scholarly recognition based on traditional standards of scholarship, research and presentation.

DEFENSE

The doctoral defense will be scheduled no sooner than 90 days and no longer than 180 days from the time that all academic and financial obligations have been met. You will be notified by the Office of the Registrar of your eligibility to schedule a defense after the following have been received:

- Thesis Proposal
- Thesis Cover Sheet
- Abstract and Biographical Statement
- Thesis Supervisor Report Form answering the six key points within the thesis (this form is mailed directly to our offices by the Thesis Supervisor)
- One electronic copy of the thesis (PDF or MS Word format)
- Payment in full

Every student is different and unique. Here at GTF, it is always our goal to offer options that fit the needs and desires of our students. One of the highlights of a doctoral program is the defense. This gives students the opportunity and challenge to present their research through conversations with faculty readers. To give students options in this highlight moment of their studies, GTF is now providing three different defense possibilities. Students and their advisors are invited to choose the option that best fits their desires and needs. The defense options are as follows:

1. The Doctoral Defense by Written Disputation

The GTF offers a modified version of the Roman tradition known as disputations, i.e., a roster of faculty-constructed questions to which the doctoral defendant must reply.

Written disputations allow the doctoral student to respond more formally and thoughtfully to faculty questions over a period of time. Additionally, this format allows the student to avoid the expense of travel required for an on-site oral defense.

Evaluation of the student thesis will occur within 90 days from submission of the thesis and all required documents and fees. Members of the Doctoral Committee will formulate and submit to the doctoral student a list of five formal questions to which the student must respond in writing by email within two

weeks. The student responses will be reviewed by faculty within approximately two weeks. Upon review and acceptance of the written disputations, the doctoral student will be informed by email of his/her eligibility for graduation.

2. The Oral Doctoral Defense through video conferencing

The GTF now offers an online video option for an oral defense. In this option, the faculty defense committee will assemble in the conference room of our Oklahoma City offices, and the student will join us through video conferencing technology. The defense will then proceed as a traditional oral defense. Once the student has answered the questions of the defense panel, the video feed will be temporarily suspended while the panel makes its judgments. When ready, the video feed will be reopened, and the doctoral student will be informed of the panel's decisions concerning the approval of the defense and the eligibility for graduation.

3. On Site Oral Doctoral Defense

Students can elect to travel to the Oklahoma City Offices of the GTF for an on-site oral defense. The defense panel will meet with the student in the conference room and proceed with a traditional oral defense. In this case, students are responsible for their own travel costs. GTF has an arrangement with several hotels near our Oklahoma City offices that will offer reduced rates for hotel rooms.