

# **HANDBOOK**

## **Master of Arts in Theology**

**A Joint Program  
of the Saint Paul Seminary School of Divinity  
and the Department of Theology**

**University of St. Thomas  
St. Paul, MN**

**Revised August 2005**

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**Handbook**  
**MASTER OF ARTS IN THEOLOGY**  
**The Saint Paul Seminary School of Divinity**  
**and Department of Theology**  
**University of St. Thomas**

### **Introduction**

The Master of Arts degree at the University of St. Thomas has a long tradition. In 1948, the Saint Paul Seminary was accredited by the North Central Association to offer an M.A. in Church History – the first seminary in the Midwest to receive such accreditation. Twenty years later, the degree was re-fashioned as an M.A. in Theology with five areas of specialization, which was offered to lay people and seminarians alike. In 1991, it became a general degree in theology built around a common core of courses and with a special focus on the methodological issues that shape how theology is done. In 2001, the program was revised again to serve those who want to use the degree as a stepping-stone to the Ph. D. or other advanced degrees in theology, as well as those who want a general theological education. Thus, like the earlier version, the revised Master of Arts in Theology (M.A.T.) program is built around a common core of courses to ensure that all students have breadth of knowledge and basic skills in theology. However, under the new program, those wishing to pursue further graduate work are able to specialize in one of four areas: Bible, historical theology, systematic theology, and moral theology. Leadership and teaching responsibilities in the program are shared between the faculties of the Saint Paul Seminary School of Divinity and the Department of Theology.

In its current configuration, the M.A.T. program continues to emphasize the study of original sources so that students gain an understanding of the discipline with which professional theologians and church leaders seek to comprehend the meaning and content of divine revelation. Such discipline includes learning and applying the principles of interpretation that scholars use when doing theology and being attentive to how method shapes a theological argument. Solidly Roman Catholic in nature, the degree also invites students to appreciate the wisdom of theologians from other Christian traditions as we all strive to know, love, and serve God.

The primary focus of the M.A.T. program is the academic study of theology, by means of which students might gain the knowledge and skills necessary to engage in intellectual discourse about theological concerns. However, because this program is situated in a School of Divinity where the issues of personal spiritual growth and development are esteemed, M.A.T. students have available to them a variety of resources for the spiritual life. For example, opportunities to reflect individually and together on the meaning and importance of their research for the pastoral life of the Church are regularly

available. In addition, students are invited to participate in the liturgical worship of the resident community.

### M.A.T. Program Goals

The goals of the M.A.T. program are as follows:

- To serve the diverse needs of a broader public by providing two options for the M.A.T. degree: a non-thesis option for those who desire a general theological education and a thesis option for those who intend to pursue the Ph.D. or other advanced degrees in theology;
- To help students gain mastery of the content of Christian theology—the Bible, the fundamental issues of Christian theology, the history and development of doctrine, especially within the Roman Catholic tradition, moral decision-making, and the sacramental life of the Church;
- To assist students in attaining competency in addressing the tasks of theology through a critical understanding of various theological methods and through proficiency in research and theological argumentation;
- To foster among students an appreciation for the place of theologians and the academic study of theology in the life of the Church;
- To contribute to the mission of Christ and the Church by preparing students who will witness and teach the faith, whether in schools, colleges, or faith formation programs;
- To provide students with resources for developing a spirituality that is attentive to God’s revelation in the Sacred Scriptures and history, that facilitates personal integration and wholeness, and that actively engages in the promotion of justice and love.

### The M.A.T. and Its Relationship to Other Degree Programs at the School of Divinity

The Saint Paul Seminary School of Divinity is home to several degree programs: the Master of Divinity (M.Div.), the Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies (M.A.P.S.), the Master of Arts in Religious Education (M.A.R.E.), and the Master of Arts in Theology (M.A.T.) degrees. Because the largest of these programs is the Master of Divinity, with its emphasis on priesthood formation, the Saint Paul Seminary School of Divinity has a deep and pervasive pastoral commitment. The term *pastoral*, however, is not synonymous with *practical*. Rather, the school is pastoral in the sense that it focuses on the meaning of revelation for the life of the Church, for Christian discipleship, and for renewal and salvation of the world. The Master of Arts in Theology is offered jointly by

the School of Divinity and the Department of Theology, but is housed at the Saint Paul Seminary School of Divinity.

All of these degree programs flow from the understanding that their central mission is to serve the Church. The academic study of theology pursued in the M.A.T. degree enriches the pastoral mission of the Church by continuing to ask of our traditions those questions that will lead us into an ever-deepening insight into the mystery of God. The Master of Divinity degree, while sharing a concern for the issues of theology, focuses on preparing ordained and lay leaders for the Church and its evangelical role in the world. The Master of Arts in Pastoral Studies shares with the M.Div. degree a concern for pastoral leadership within parishes and other church-related settings. The Master of Arts in Religious Education, offered in cooperation with the School of Education, deepens both the theological grounding and the pedagogical and leadership skills needed to be effective as a teacher of religion or director of faith formation. Finally, the Doctor of Ministry degree, building on the work of the M.Div. degree, challenges professional ministers to create new ways to understand and undertake a kind of pastoral leadership that is anchored in the wisdom of theology.

The work of these distinct programs is enriched by a common love of Scripture and tradition and a concern that the message of the Gospel be a clear, compelling, and hopeful call to conversion. Opportunities for shared worship, informal conversation, and special community events bring students in the various degree programs together for a fellowship that strengthens their shared ideals.

## 1. Program Overview

The Master of Arts in Theology (M.A.T.) is a 36-credit degree program focusing on advanced academic study of theology. Such study involves working with original sources, developing the skills, principles, and methods of theological reasoning, and understanding the tradition as a context for contemporary theological discourse. The program has two tracks. One track requires a thesis and allows students to specialize within a subdiscipline of theology, such as Bible, historical theology, systematic theology, or moral theology. Students who intend eventually to pursue a Ph.D. in theology are recommended to opt for this track. The other track is a generalist or terminal degree, designed for students who wish to pursue the M.A.T. for personal enrichment or as preparation for teaching religion in a school setting, for parish work, and for various other faith-formation ministries. In place of a thesis, students opting for this track will complete a portfolio of research projects.

Students in both tracks take 18 credits (6 courses) from a list of core courses to ensure a breadth of background in theology. Students in the generalist track take an additional 18 credits (6 courses) in electives from across the subdisciplines of theology: Scripture, dogmatic theology, sacraments/liturgy, church history, and moral theology. Because the generalist degree is intended to provide a broad background in theology, students are discouraged from concentrating their coursework in a single subdiscipline. Students in the specialist track take 15 elective credits (5 courses), at least 12 of which are in an approved area of specialization. They receive 3 credits for the successful completion of the thesis. In addition to the offerings available at the School of Divinity, students have the option of taking an elective course in one of the seminaries of the Minnesota Consortium of Theological Schools or at another Catholic university or college. All such decisions about course selection must be made in consultation with the academic adviser.

All M.A.T. students need to demonstrate reading proficiency in one foreign research language preferably by the time they have completed 12 credits in their program of studies, but at least by the time they have completed 18 credits. Likewise, students in both tracks must successfully complete written and oral comprehensive examinations at the conclusion of their studies.

Should a student begin studies under the specialist option and later decide that the generalist option better suits his or her long-term goals, the student will be permitted to change options. However, the student will be required to fulfill all of the requirements of the other option, including the research portfolio. Such decisions should be made in consultation with the student's academic adviser. In addition, the student must notify the Program Director and the Registration Coordinator so that records can be changed to reflect that decision.

## 2. Admission Requirements

The following items are necessary for application to the M.A.T. program:

- a. An application form and nonrefundable application fee.
- b. An earned bachelor's degree, with a minimum cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.0, from an accredited college or university.
- c. Official transcripts of all college/university and previous graduate work, which should be sent directly from the academic institution(s) to the School of Divinity Registration Coordinator's Office.
- d. Prerequisite undergraduate courses or their equivalent taken within the last 10 years:
  - Introduction to Philosophy
  - Introduction to Theology
  - Moral Theology or Ethics
  - Old or New Testament
  - Sacramental Theology, Church History, or Historical Theology.
- e. Scores from the Graduate Record Exam (G.R.E.), including the writing component, taken within the last five years. The score for the writing component must be 4.0 or above.
- f. Essay as described in the M.A.T. application form.
- g. Three letters of recommendation from persons who can assess the academic potential of the applicant.

Waiver of the G.R.E.Requirement.

Ordinarily waivers of the G.R.E. requirement will not be granted. However, the director of the MAT program, in consultation with the Dean of the School of Divinity, may choose to waive the G.R.E. for applicants who have demonstrated their potential for academic success by virtue of the fact that they already possess advanced degrees that require a high level of competency in research and technical writing skills.

M.A.T./M.Div. dual-degree applicants may be admitted to the M.A.T. program provisionally, pending the satisfactory completion of the G.R.E. However, they are expected to meet all application requirements before they are formally admitted to the program.

### **3. The Academic Adviser**

Once students are admitted to the program, they will be assigned an academic adviser. Later, as students become more familiar with the various subdisciplines of theology and with faculty members in the M.A.T. program, they are free to select a new adviser with whom they would like to work or remain with their assigned adviser. The adviser becomes the student's primary link with the program in terms of policies and procedures and matters related to course requirements. Therefore, students should consult their advisers at least once each semester to ensure that their program develops as an integrated whole, not merely as a collection of discrete courses. The adviser should also be seen as a potential mentor—someone who can assist students with the process of integrating what they are learning and addressing the questions their studies provoke. Students who wish to change academic advisers must notify the Program Director, the Registration Coordinator, and the former adviser of their desired change.

#### The Thesis Adviser

Students who are pursuing the specialist option will also have a thesis adviser. In some cases students choose their academic adviser for their thesis adviser. However, it is not unusual for a student to seek someone other than the academic adviser for that function. Because of the importance of the thesis, the student will want to work with a faculty member who is expert in the subject area chosen.

#### 4. Core Courses

The six core courses (18 credits) for the M.A.T. degree provide a broad framework for theological inquiry. Historically grounded, the courses engage students in an exploration of theological issues, themes, and concepts that reflect the enduring questions with which believers have struggled over the centuries. They provide methodological tools and introduce students to the critical bibliography for disciplined study of the topic under investigation. These courses also serve as prerequisites to various electives in the M.A.T. program, and therefore should be taken in proper sequence. Academic advisers can assist students in making selections that best meet their respective needs.

**SS525: Survey of Old Testament Literature (3 credits)**

Surveys the major genres within the Old Testament canon and examines the principles of interpretation employed in the analysis of the texts. The course stresses a plurality of approaches available to the interpreter, while teaching the classical methods of biblical interpretation. The course also introduces Catholic views of canon, inspiration and interpretation.

--OR--

**SS530: Survey of New Testament Literature (3 credits)**

Surveys the major genres within the New Testament canon and examines the principles of interpretation employed in the analysis of the texts. The course stresses a plurality of approaches available to the interpreter, while teaching the classical methods of biblical interpretation. The course also introduces Catholic views of canon, inspiration and interpretation.

**DT502: Theology of the Church (3 credits)**

Provides an in-depth scriptural and historical examination of the mystery of the church. Students will explore the historical origins of contemporary issues in ecclesiology such as universal salvation, Christian unity, authority and collegiality, the role of laity, and infallibility. Additional topics include the mission, membership, and ministries of the Catholic Church in the world and its relationship to other churches.

**DT661: Christian Theology of God (3 credits)**

Presents a Christian understanding of God based on Scripture and the historical tradition, with attention given to questions of interpretation. This course emphasizes careful reading of key magisterial texts, their implications for the development of Christology and trinitarian theology, and contemporary questions and issues.

**HS 601: Patristics ( 3 credits)**

Introduces the literature and theological themes of the patristic period, from the first to the seventh centuries. The course emphasizes reading and discusses primary sources in translation. Themes may include the formation of Christian doctrine, the church, spiritual life broadly construed, the interpretation of the Bible, the relation of faith and culture and the emergence of a Christian consciousness of history.

**MT601: Fundamental Moral Theology (3 credits)**

Provides an introduction to the traditions of Catholic moral theology. The course emphasizes a systematic approach to moral thinking, including the magisterial and historical development of Catholicism's idea of moral goodness. Students will gain a broad theological understanding of human freedom and human nature, conscience, moral norms and systems, sin and the virtues.

**ST601: Eucharist (3 credits)**

Studies the theology of the Eucharistic celebration, the central act of the church's worship. The course examines the sacramental theology of the Eucharist through its liturgical history, doctrinal declarations and the writings of theologians. It explores the relationship between the Eucharistic tradition and Christology, ecclesiology, and eschatology and provides a foundation for sound pastoral practice and teaching.

Dual-degree students:

M.Div./MAT dual-degree students will not take the MAT core course, DT 661 Christian Theology of God, since the M.Div. program requires them to take both DT 504 Christology (Theology I) and DT 706 Trinity (Theology IV). Instead, either DT 504 or DT 706 must be taken for MAT credit with an appropriate research component.

## 5. M.A.T. Course Standards

By the time M.A.T. students have completed their core courses, they should be fully familiar with library resources and databases for theological research. These include library catalogs, Old and New Testament Abstracts, ATLA, CETEDOC, etc. Professors who teach core courses are responsible for introducing students to these resources and giving them practical experience in their use. M.A.T. students at the completion of their core courses also should have mastered the skills of writing annotations and bibliography. The faculty recommends the Turabian/Chicago Manual of Style or MLA style sheet for writing assignments. Students working in various subdisciplines of theology may be asked to learn other style sheets, as well.

Research papers are the norm for M.A.T. courses. In core courses, these papers (ordinarily 10 pages or more in length) give students repeated practice applying research methods and developing and analyzing theological argumentation. In upper division elective courses, research paper assignments should encourage M.A.T. students to be more constructive in their work. No M.A.T. student should be able to complete his or her coursework without repeated experiences of writing research papers.

While other types of writing may be appropriate for MAT students, the objectives of those writing assignments should match the academic focus of the program. For example:

- Summary of a reading—M.A.T. students need to be able to accurately and fairly present a scholarly argument;
- Reflection papers—M.A.T. students would be expected to provide academic reflections on readings, assess the academic merits of an argument, etc.;
- Book reviews—M.A.T. students should be able to clearly articulate the author's thesis, assess the arguments provided, and comment on the efficacy of the methodologies employed;
- Annotated bibliographies—M.A.T. students would be expected to use library resources and databases to prepare a bibliography, to summarize accurately the content of each entry, and to compile entries in compliance with a designated style sheet.

In certain circumstances, M.A.T. students may need to take elective courses or sections of core courses that were designed for M.Div. students. In those cases, M.A.T. students may be required to complete different reading and/or writing assignments to receive M.A.T. credit. For instance, if the course requirements are primarily geared towards pastoral issues, M.A.T. students may be required to add or substitute some of the readings for others that address the academic issues for the given topic. Professors are encouraged to consult the M.A.T. Master Reading List, and, where appropriate, to assign to their M.A.T. students one or more items from that list.

In classes where students from various degree programs come together, efforts should be made to foster fruitful interaction concerning the goals and practical implications of theological discourse. For example, a professor might have students from various programs each react to a course reading and discuss the different perspectives they take on the topic. Because M.Div. and M.A.P.S. students already have a sense of

student community, professors should also encourage students from the M.A.T. program to meet together so that they can discuss issues in the course from their own perspective.

Given the range of cultural contexts of theology today, students in the M.A.T. program need to be aware of multicultural perspectives on theological issues. Therefore, M.A.T. courses will include readings from diverse perspectives, and students will be encouraged to include some research materials from a multicultural perspective in their term papers.

In their writing and research, M.A.T. students are expected to conform to the current academic standards of professional societies and journals of theology. In upper division courses, they are encouraged to incorporate into their research one or more items written in a language other than English, in order to reinforce proficiency through practical use of the language.

## **6. Academic Probation**

In order to maintain satisfactory performance in the program, students must maintain a cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of at least 3.0, normally earning a minimum of a B grade for a course. Falling below a 3.0 GPA for any one semester automatically places a student on academic probation. Within one month from the beginning of academic probation, the student must meet with his or her academic adviser and draft a plan for improved performance. The plan must be approved by both the Academic Dean of the School of Divinity and the Director of the M.A.T. program. For full-time students, improved performance must be demonstrated within the next semester or the student risks dismissal from the program. Part-time students are granted a probation period of two semesters or three courses, whichever comes first. In some instances, resolution of probation may require additional coursework beyond the 36 credits.

## **7. Foreign Language Competency**

Both tracks of the M.A.T. program require reading proficiency in one foreign research language. Commonly used languages for research include Greek or Hebrew, French, German, Spanish, Latin, and Italian. The choice of the language will be determined in consultation with the academic adviser and must be approved by the academic adviser. Competency will be demonstrated through a written exam administered from within the faculty of the M.A.T. program; course credits will not be considered sufficient proof of proficiency. The level of language proficiency expected involves the ability to read and translate a theological text, whether a primary or secondary text, of a minimum of 250 words with 75% accuracy within a period of one hour. Students may use a dictionary.

Preferably the language proficiency should be fulfilled by the time the student has completed 12 credits in the program, but it must be fulfilled before students have completed 18 credits (not to exceed two years from the time of admission). The objective is that, where appropriate, students may begin using the foreign research language in coursework. Arrangements for the language proficiency exam are made through the M.A.T. Program Director.

Students who wish to pursue graduate study beyond the M.A.T. should be aware that language requirements for those seeking admission to doctoral programs vary considerably depending on the program and the area of study. For example, students specializing in Bible often need proficiency in several languages, ancient and modern, such as Hebrew, Greek, Latin, German, and French. Therefore, Ph.D-bound students should consult their advisers about options that might best prepare them to meet their long-term goals. The School of Divinity offers courses in Hebrew, Greek and Latin on a regular basis. Other opportunities for language study are available through the undergraduate Modern and Classical Languages department at the University of St. Thomas and at a number of other academic institutions in the metro area.

## **8. The Master Reading List**

The redesign of the M.A. program in 1991 introduced a Master Reading List as one of its distinct features. The most recent revision in 2001 retains the Master Reading List, but expands the selections available to students and redefines the function of the list. In the current program, the Master Reading List is an annotated bibliography that covers the following areas of study: Bible, historical theology, systematic theology, moral theology, and general theology, which includes such areas as sacramental and liturgical theology. The bibliographic entries pertaining to each area of study are further subdivided into various content areas, methodologies, etc. With the assistance of their academic advisers, students will make selections from each area of study and each subdivision within a given area of study to ensure an adequate breadth of theological knowledge and exposure to major thinkers in the disciplines of theology. In this way, the Master Reading List affords students a manageable way to fill in “gaps” in their educational experience. The Master Reading List also serves to direct students to important works that should be included in their research for coursework. For this reason, students receive the Master Reading List at matriculation.

Students should finalize their reading lists with the advisers by the time they have completed 18 credits in the program. To begin the process, the student must submit his or her proposed reading list in writing, along with a statement giving a rationale for his or her selections, to the academic adviser. If the adviser has questions or concerns about particular selections on the reading list s/he may recommend that the student contact another M.A.T. faculty member for advice. When the student and adviser agree on the final form of the reading list, the student will obtain the adviser’s signature on the “Comprehensive Reading List” approval form and submit the form, together with the reading list, to the registrar’s office. The student will not be allowed to register for comprehensive exams until these documents are received in the registrar’s office. Students should also be advised that their reading lists are subject to emendation by their respective comprehensive exam committees, but no changes may be made less than one month before the scheduled comprehensive exams.

The Master Reading List will be reviewed and revised by the M.A.T. faculty as needed. However, students will not be held responsible for any reading list requirements except the ones in effect at the time they entered the program.

## **9. Research Portfolio for the Generalist Option**

In place of a thesis, students who choose the generalist option are required to prepare a portfolio of four (4) research papers. Under ordinary circumstances, these research papers are written for a particular course and then revised as needed before they become part of the student's portfolio. The professor should be informed at the beginning of a course that the student intends to write a paper for his or her portfolio, so that appropriate direction can be given to the project during the course. The research papers should demonstrate independent research skills and may require the use of a foreign language where appropriate. When the student has completed the paper and revised it to the satisfaction of the supervising professor, the student must complete the "Research Portfolio for the Generalist Option" approval form, obtain the professor's signature, and submit the approval form, together with a final copy of the paper, to the registrar's office. The portfolio serves as a public record of the student's work during the program and is available to the faculty examining committee during comprehensive exams. Therefore all four portfolio papers must be submitted prior to the time that the student registers for the comprehensive exam.

## **10. Thesis for the Specialist Option**

The thesis is one of the primary means of the student to demonstrate mastery at the conclusion of the M.A.T. program. It is a written work of publishable quality that demonstrates research abilities, mastery of methodology, and independent critical thinking skills. It requires the use of a foreign language(s) where appropriate. Developed in consultation with the thesis adviser, the work should have a demonstrable thesis which the student argues using an acceptable and identifiable method in a consistent manner. Through completion of the thesis, the student is able to demonstrate mastery of theological research skills, the use of a method or methods appropriate to the topic, and the skills necessary to conveying critical thought in clear, correct written form.

### When and How To Choose A Topic

Choosing a topic for the thesis is one of the delights of the specialist option of the M.A.T. program. The topic should flow from the on-going questions the student raises about what he or she is reading, discussing in class, or hearing in lectures. Ideally, students will begin early in their studies to think about and discuss with their academic advisers possible areas of interest they would like to pursue in a thesis. The earlier a student knows the general subject area in which he or she would like to write, the greater the opportunity to focus their reading and reflection as they take core and elective courses. Students should have a topic approved by their advisers by the time they complete the core courses and two electives (24 credits). Conversations with faculty, especially the academic adviser, can be very helpful in clarifying the student's direction for research. The academic adviser can also assist the student in identifying a faculty member who would be most appropriate as the student's thesis adviser.

### Writing the Thesis

The first step in writing the thesis is to prepare a thesis proposal. The student is expected to provide the thesis adviser with a 3-4 page proposal indicating the purpose and

scope of the topic, its methodological grounding, and a basic supporting bibliography. If possible, it should also include an outline showing how the topic will be developed. All this information enables the thesis adviser to be a resource in clarifying the topic and helping the student set appropriate parameters.

Writing a thesis requires time to reflect, contemplate the subject, digest the research, and consider the alternative conclusions that might be drawn. Therefore, planning a schedule for writing that enables students to give time to this important task is critical. Some students prefer to take a whole year to write the thesis, drafting sections for adviser critique. Others relegate the writing portion to one semester. Students must decide the pace in which they can do their best work and consider what the subject demands. Consulting with the thesis adviser and working out a timetable offers a structure that can keep students focused and motivated. Under ordinary circumstances, the thesis should be completed or near completion by the time the student takes comprehensive exams.

### Role of the Thesis Adviser

The thesis adviser plays many important roles. First and foremost, the adviser is a subject area expert who can help the student refine a topic for research. As an expert, the adviser can help ensure that the topic chosen is manageable and appropriate at the master's level. The adviser can help set realistic boundaries. The adviser should approve the definition of the topic, the working outline, and the initial bibliography. Each of these three elements allows the adviser to offer advice that can save time and direct student energy. The adviser will read and approve the thesis. This function is best done in major sections so that the adviser can help make midcourse corrections as needed.

### Form of the Thesis

The School of Divinity requires that all major research be written using the MLA Style Sheet. Students are expected to become familiar with the Style Sheet and follow its rules. The MLA Style Sheet can be found in the library or purchased at the bookstore. The Registration Coordinator has instructions for how the thesis is to be formatted and bound.

### Evaluation of the Thesis

The thesis is evaluated by a three-person committee, which will be determined by the Academic Dean, in consultation with the thesis adviser and the Director of the M.A.T. program. The student must submit the final copy of the thesis to the thesis adviser at least six weeks prior to graduation in the semester in which he or she intends to graduate. The committee will then be given two weeks to read and evaluate the thesis to determine whether or not it meets the expectations for writing a thesis. If at least two of three members of the committee accept the thesis, the adviser may then assign a passing grade to the thesis. If the student receives a failing grade, then he or she may rework and resubmit the thesis during the following semester. A second failing grade will result in dismissal from the program. Three credits are given to the completed thesis. The thesis is not defended before a committee. Two bound copies of the thesis must be submitted to the registrar's office at least four weeks prior to graduation.

## 11. The Comprehensive Exam

The purpose of the comprehensive examination is to test the student's general knowledge of theology in the core areas of the program and to assess his or her ability to address theological issues using accepted theological methods.

Ideally, students should begin preparation for their comprehensive examination early in the program. Students are encouraged to review courses as they are completed to identify key ideas, authors, and issues raised over the semester and select items from the Master Reading List to incorporate into research projects as appropriate. It is useful for students to work in study groups from time to time, using the perspectives of different people to identify the key concepts within individual courses and the interrelationships that exist between them. The exam is intended to be *comprehensive*, indicating a breadth of awareness of the content and methods of theology, as these have been addressed throughout the program.

### Arranging for the Comprehensive Exam

Upon the completion of coursework, and after consultation with their advisers, M.A.T students can initiate the process of arranging for the comprehensive exam, which includes both a written and oral component. Students are required to register for the comprehensive exam at least eight weeks before their examination date. The registration form and the comprehensive examination schedule can be obtained from the School of Divinity Registration Coordinator's office. Students will not be allowed to register for the comprehensive exam if they have not already submitted their signed "Comprehensive Reading List" approval form, together with a copy of their reading list. See §8 Master Reading List for more information. Students who are pursuing the generalist option are also required to submit their research portfolios before registering for comprehensive exams. See §9 Research Portfolio for the Generalist Option.

After the student has submitted his or her registration for the comprehensive exam, the Dean then consults with the Program Director and appoints three faculty members to serve as a student's examining committee. Ordinarily, this committee will include the student's academic/thesis adviser and someone teaching one of the core courses. Each member of the committee prepares one or two questions that are of sufficient complexity to warrant two hours of student writing time. The exam questions should test the student's general knowledge of the content of the topic, but also the student's understanding of theological method. For example, a question on a biblical topic might also ask about the use of historical critical methods, or a question on a topic of systematic theology might ask about methods of systematic argument. The content of the question(s) will be drawn from the core courses and from the student's reading list.

### The Written Component

The written portion of the comprehensive exam will consist of three two-hour exam periods in which students will be given some choice of questions. Questions are designed to ask students to recall, integrate, and apply their studies in a critical fashion. That is, students are not asked to simply recite data but to use theological data in describing, analyzing, and/or assessing questions and issues posed by careful theological

investigation. Examples of comprehensive questions can be found in the appendix of the *Handbook on Academic Policies*.

After the student has completed the written examination, the three faculty members of the committee appointed by the Dean evaluate all three questions and judge the written component of the comprehensive exam on a Pass/Fail basis. Committee members must notify the Dean of the results within seven days of the completion of the written examination.

Students need to perform satisfactorily on all three questions of the written portion of the comprehensive examination in order to move to the oral portion. In instances in which a student has generally done well but left gaps in his or her responses, the members of the committee may decide to proceed with the oral portion of the exam to allow the student an opportunity to further develop ideas that were included in the written examination. Such a decision will be made in consultation with the Dean. If a student fails one question of the exam, the Dean may ask the student to take an oral exam or complete a second written exam for that one area within one month of notification of results. If the student fails two questions, he or she must retake the entire exam at one of the scheduled comprehensive examination dates within the next calendar year. Students must pass the second exam in order to complete their degree. A second failure of the exam results in the student's dismissal from the program.

### The Oral Component

The oral examination is scheduled within two weeks of the written examination. The one-hour examination takes the form of a theological conversation in which students are expected to demonstrate their ability to "think on their feet." Questions for the oral examination usually emerge from the student's responses on the written exam. For students who are pursuing the specialist option, the committee may ask about progress on the thesis and inquire about the nature of the thesis and the arguments that it is generating. The committee might also explore with the student the conclusions he or she has drawn about theological method and its role in theological inquiry. For students who chose the generalist option, the committee might ask about research projects contained in the student's portfolio.

This second component of the comprehensive exams is evaluated on a Pass/Fail/Pass with Honors basis. At the completion of the oral exam, the student will leave the room for a brief period to give the committee time to confer, and then the student is asked to return to hear the final assessment. Should a student fail the oral exam, the committee may recommend that the student be allowed to re-take it at a later time. Such a decision will be made in consultation with the Dean.

## **12. Graduation**

Students need to apply for graduation during the first month of the semester or session in which they intend to graduate (September, February, or June). Application forms are available in the School of Divinity Registration Coordinator's office. In order to graduate, all coursework must be completed. In addition, the student must have completed all other program requirements including the foreign language proficiency, the research portfolio (for those seeking the generalist degree) or the thesis (for those seeking the specialist degree), and written and oral comprehensive examinations. Students taking the specialist option are advised that the M.A.T. degree is not official until the student has turned in two bound copies of the thesis to the School of Divinity Registration Coordinator.

Students must fulfill all degree requirements within eight calendar years of admission to the program. No course completed more than eight years before the completion of the degree may be used to fulfill the requirements for a degree.

## **13. Spiritual Development**

While formation tends to be associated with more pastorally oriented programs of study, M.A.T. students have regularly expressed an interest in opportunities to reflect on their studies and research in terms of their spiritual import. Therefore, although M.A.T. students are not required to participate in any spiritual formation activities, several activities are available to those who wish to attend.

- M.A.T. students are invited to attend days of recollection offered in the fall and spring for the seminary community. Often topics for these events have broad relevance for faithful Christian living.
- M.A.T. students are welcomed and encouraged to attend Eucharist and Liturgy of the Hours with the seminary community whenever their schedules permit.
- M.A.T. students are encouraged to join the Evening Prayer at Table events scheduled throughout the year.

## 14. Other Program Policies

All policies that govern the school's programs are described in detail in the *Handbook On Academic Policies*. Because these policies are binding on all enrolled students, M.A.T. students are advised to review them carefully. The following policies are of particular importance to M.A.T. students.

- Any changes, substitutions, waivers, or exceptions in program requirements need the approval of the academic adviser who will typically consult with the M.A.T. Program Director and/or the Dean.
- Courses in the M.Div. curriculum with content similar to M.A.T. core courses can be used to meet program requirements, with permission of the adviser. M.Div. electives, because they presuppose a more extensive background, can be used as M.A.T. electives if the academic adviser agrees. When M.A.T. students are permitted to take M.Div. courses in place of M.A.T. core courses or M.Div. electives, these courses must be completed according to the M.A.T. course standards listed above.
- Pastoral theology courses (courses designated with a PT prefix) do not fulfill M.A.T. course requirements. However, there may be instances in which a PT course enhances the quality of a student's overall program or has direct relevance for his or her thesis. In those instances, with the approval of the academic adviser and the Dean, such a course can be included in a student's program of study provided the course requirements are adapted to meet M.A.T. course standards.
- Students can transfer up to six credits of study from another accredited institution with approval of their academic adviser and the Dean. Forms for completing this transfer are available from the Registration Coordinator.
- The Saint Paul Seminary School of Divinity is a member of the Minnesota Consortium of Theological Schools. Therefore, students may cross-register for courses during the regular academic year at no additional cost. Students who wish to take advantage of this opportunity should select courses in consultation with their academic adviser to insure that they are applicable to their program of study. The Saint Paul Seminary School of Divinity Registration Coordinator facilitates registration for courses at consortium schools. See Handbook on Academic Policies for more information.
- In some instances, a student might need to do an independent study, because of irresolvable schedule conflicts or because a particular subject is not offered in the current curriculum. To arrange for an independent study, the student must first make arrangements with an appropriate faculty member and then complete the independent study form available in the Registration Coordinator's office. Independent study courses, by their nature, are substantially reading courses. The faculty mentor helps the student select a bibliography and then determines how often the student and professor will meet and what sort of final requirements will be imposed. Most often, an independent study will require a research paper in which the student is expected to show mastery of the subject content and the ability to address critically an aspect of

that subject. Not more than nine credits in independent study can be applied to the degree without petitioning the Dean.

- Students must maintain a 3.0 Grade Point Average (GPA), normally earning a minimum of a B grade for a course. Falling below a 3.0 GPA for any one semester automatically places a student on academic probation. Probation must be remedied by improved performance within the next semester or the student risks dismissal from the program. In some instances, resolution of probation may require additional coursework beyond the program requirements.
- Students must fulfill all degree requirements within eight calendar years of admission to the program. No course completed more than eight years before the completion of the degree may be used to fulfill the requirements for a degree.

## 15. Program Leadership

The leadership responsible for the M.A.T. degree consists of the Dean of the School of Divinity, the Program Director, and the M.A.T. faculty committee.

### The Dean of the School of Divinity

The Dean exercises general oversight for all academic programs of the School of Divinity. In that capacity, the Dean ensures that the M.A.T. program has the resources, planning, and evaluation, as well as support of the administration in achieving its outcomes. In consultation with the faculty, the Dean appoints the Director of the M.A.T. program for a three-year renewable term. While the Dean relies on the Program Director to provide day-to-day leadership for the program and depends on academic advisers to mentor students in their studies, the Dean also is available to students as needed.

### The Program Director

The M.A.T. Program Director has primary responsibility for cultivating a “community of scholarship” among M.A.T. students. The degree involves more than an accumulation of credits. It seeks to enable students to do theology. That does not occur in isolation but in the environment of critical conversation. Such conversation, of course, begins in the classroom where dialogue between students and professor and among students themselves fosters understanding, an insightful appropriation of theological data, the strength of one’s emerging conclusions, and the ability to get beyond one’s initial assumptions and biases. The Program Director, working with the Dean, helps faculty examine ways to encourage the active learning of M.A.T. students. The Director initially orients students to the program, identifies potential advisers, and serves as a resource person to students throughout their programs.

### The M.A.T. Committee

Representatives of the Department of Theology and the School of Divinity staff the M.A.T. Committee. This represents the joint commitment of the Department and School to develop and support the M.A.T. program as a resource of the University of St. Thomas. The committee supports the Program Director and Dean in monitoring the issues that emerge regarding the program. It provides consultation on curriculum and program requirements, academic policies and procedures, orientation of faculty teaching in the program, and revisions to the Master Reading List. Moreover, the committee will periodically review course syllabi, a sampling of course papers written by students, and a sampling of theses in light of M.A.T. course standards. The Dean and Theology Department Chair appoint members of the committee for three-year renewable terms. Students may submit suggestions or concerns to the Committee through the Program Director. Once each year the Committee will meet with M.A.T. students.