

Guidelines for Exit Theses

Approved by the College Committee of the General Assembly of Australia
February 2006

General requirements

One of the requirements of the course of training for candidates for the ministry of the Presbyterian Church of Australia is the submission, in the final year (year four) of the course, of a thesis of 4000 to 8000 words in length, or 15000 words when the thesis forms part of an accredited award, in the area of Biblical studies. This thesis is to be supervised by an appropriate teacher in the theological college (or hall) and is to be examined by an external examiner appointed by the College Committee of the General Assembly of Australia.

Content

The thesis in Biblical studies may take a wide variety of forms, including the exegesis of a passage or related passages, the development of a biblical theme, the examination of a linguistic, literary, historical or theological issue in Scripture, or the explication of Biblical material with a view to its application to a contemporary social, ethical or pastoral situation. The emphasis, however, must be on the Scriptures themselves (Old and/or New Testament).

Standard

The standard expected of the thesis is that of a major final year undergraduate essay. The thesis should provide the basis for an assessment of the student's ability to develop a sustained argument for a particular position. It should show competence in using the primary sources, particularly the Scriptures in their original languages, and should make appropriate use of relevant tools available for study of the Biblical text. Students should be familiar with the major secondary literature in the area, including material in journal articles. As an undergraduate essay, its purpose is not necessarily to assess originality in research, but rather competence and good judgment in the way the candidate handles the material and interacts with the range of scholarly opinion on the topic.

A high standard of English expression is expected. In this regard, it is proper for a student whose native language is other than English to obtain help if needed. The thesis should be well written, and substantially free of grammatical or stylistic errors.

Theological position

Candidates for the Presbyterian ministry should demonstrate an awareness of, and interact with, the Church's confessional position where this impinges on their topic, and should be prepared to defend their position before their presbytery. The Faculty shall send a copy of the candidate's thesis to the presbytery taking the candidate on trials for licence.

Supervision

Each candidate should have come to a fairly clear idea of the area to be covered by his thesis as he approaches the commencement of his final year in the course. Professors and lecturers are available for discussing possibilities and giving guidance. When a topic is selected, it should be formally submitted to the Faculty for approval, and the Faculty will appoint a supervisor. It is acceptable to submit as a thesis work which has been developed from material previously submitted for another purpose, but must not be in essence work which has been previously submitted for any other component of the course of training.

The supervisor may require the candidate to submit a brief outline (200 to 300 words) and a draft bibliography before proceeding further. A final draft must be submitted to the supervisor for approval before the work may be presented in its final form for external assessment.

Presentation

Theses should be presented in the following form:

- The thesis is to be neatly typed on A4 size paper. The use of a computer is encouraged for ease of correction, but care should be taken as to the quality of the printing. Laser or ink-jet printers are preferred to dot matrix printers.
- Three copies of the thesis are to be submitted, one of which is returned to the candidate after marking.
- A title page should be available to the reader either on or through the cover, including information as to the title, the year submitted and the number of words.
- The candidate's name must appear on the title page of one copy of the thesis only, i.e. two separate title pages must be prepared.
- The thesis must be substantially free of spelling, grammatical and typographical errors.
- Bibliographies and footnotes should be set out according to the guidelines published by the Australian college of Theology.
- The thesis should be bound along the spine using a patented form of binding (not expensive) in a light card or plastic protective cover.

Submission

Students must submit three copies of the thesis to the Principal of the theological college (or hall) in sufficient time to have the thesis externally marked and returned, and an exit certificate issued on the completion of all other requirements of the course. A reasonable date for final submission would normally be the end of July, but Faculties may set their own date. The three copies should be accompanied by a certification from the supervisor that the thesis is of an acceptable standard for external marking.

A thesis judged unsatisfactory will be returned to the student for revision and resubmission.

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