

Masters of Religious Studies – Normative Time Guidelines

The M.A. is designed to take two years (four semesters) of full time study. Normally students complete most of their coursework during the first year, take a couple of courses during the second year, and spend most of the second year working on their thesis.

Prior to beginning thesis research and writing, students must write a thesis prospectus in consultation with a thesis committee of three faculty. Twice annually (at the end of the summer session and at the midpoint of the spring semester) students may submit the written prospectus to the department and then present the prospectus in person to a faculty committee. The thesis presentation provides students with an opportunity to hear feedback from faculty members not on the thesis committee. Think of the presentation as a time when the entire faculty committee will be focused on each student's project, able to think through questions with the student and recommend resources.

After receiving the committee's approval, the student may begin researching and writing the thesis under the direction of his/her thesis committee. During this time, students enroll in RELS 8999. Upon completion of the thesis, the student defends her/his work before the thesis committee, whose approval of the final document is required for graduation.

Some students enter the M.A. program with a clear sense of their thesis project; others take some time to come to a topic. The following timelines represent two paths to degree completion within normative time. Timeline A reflects the progress of a student who enters the program with a thesis topic; Timeline B represents that of a student who takes more time to develop a topic.

Timeline A

Semester 1

- * Theories and Methods (required)
- * Coursework (Graduate seminars, area studies, languages)
- * Initiate thesis conversations with faculty (October).
 - * Read thesis guidelines (online).
 - * Brainstorm thesis ideas.
 - * Look for a thesis committee chairperson.
 - * Look at example thesis prospectuses (available from Graduate Director).

Semester 2

- * Coursework
- * Write thesis prospectus (January-February).
 - * In early January, let your committee know that you're planning to submit a thesis prospectus in March.

- * Complete your prospectus in time for your committee to review it before the submission deadline.
- * Submit thesis prospectus at the semester's midpoint (early March).
- * Present thesis prospectus to faculty committee (late March).
 - * Follow up on the faculty committee's feedback.

Summer

- * Begin thesis research & writing (course credit optional)

Semester 3

- * Coursework (limited)
- * Thesis research & writing (enroll in RELS 8999)
 - * Be in touch with your thesis committee; update them on your progress and offer to let them read early drafts.

Semester 4

- * Coursework (very limited)
- * Thesis writing & revising (enroll in RELS 8999)
 - * Contact your committee members as you finish your thesis draft.
 - * Give your committee plenty of time (3-4 weeks) to read the draft before your defense. You may need time to make revisions.
 - * Plan the date for your defense.
- * Graduate at the end of the spring semester!

Timeline B

Semester 1

- * Theories and Methods (required)
- * Coursework (Graduate seminars, area studies, languages)
- * Initiate thesis conversations with faculty (October).
 - * Read thesis guidelines (online).
 - * Brainstorm thesis ideas.
 - * Look for a thesis committee chairperson.
 - * Look at example thesis prospectuses (available from Graduate Director).

Semester 2

- * Coursework
- * Write thesis prospectus (March-May).
 - * Before the semester ends, let your committee know that you're planning to submit a thesis prospectus in August.
 - * Complete your prospectus in time for your committee to review it before the submission deadline. Keep in mind that faculty may be out of town during the summer.

Summer 1

- * Submit thesis prospectus at the semester's midpoint (August).
- * Present thesis prospectus to faculty committee (late August).
 - * Follow up on the faculty committee's feedback.

Semester 3

- * Coursework (limited)
- * Thesis research & writing (enroll in RELS 8999)
 - * Be in touch with your thesis committee; update them on your progress and offer to let them read early drafts.

Semester 4

- * Coursework (very limited)
- * Thesis writing & revising (enroll in RELS 8999)
 - * Contact your committee members as you finish your thesis draft.
 - * Give your committee plenty of time (3-4 weeks) to read the draft before your defense. You may need time to make revisions.
 - * Plan the date for your defense.
- * Graduate at the end of spring semester!

----- **OR** -----

Should this second summer say something like 'at the discretion of the thesis committee'?

Summer 2 (Optional)

- * Thesis writing & revising (enroll in RELS 8999)
 - * Contact your committee members as you finish your thesis draft.
 - * Give your committee plenty of time (3-4 weeks) to read the draft before your defense. You may need time to make revisions.
 - * Plan the date for your defense.
- * Graduate at the end of summer!