



*Covenant Baptist  
Theological Seminary*

*Informed Scholarship. Pastoral Heart.*

Master of Theology (ThM) Program  
Handbook

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## CBTS Master of Theology Program Core Values

### Academic Excellence

We seek to provide a high level of scholarship and academic training, in service to the church and the advancement of the Great Commission.

### Relationally Driven

Scholarship is best produced in community. At CBTS, professors and students eagerly seek to learn from one another and spur each other on in the faith.

### Personal Development

It is the desire of the faculty to see each student grow intellectually, skillfully, and spiritually during their academic endeavor.

### Faithful Publication

CBTS professors seek to responsibly engage in evangelical scholarship, and part of ThM studies at CBTS involves learning to contribute to scholarly discussion through publication, without compromising our Confessional identity.

### Global Focus

Since God is in the business of making worshippers from all the peoples of the earth, CBTS is committed to being globally minded. Therefore, CBTS seeks to foster global-mindedness in all its students. It is our desire to produce missionaries and church-planters for all nations of the earth. CBTS hopes that its professors and ThM graduates will seek to make disciples of every tribe and tongue through cross-cultural teaching and missionary endeavors, as the Lord providentially allows.

### Church Centered

Our goal is to help the church to prepare men to undertake the full range of pastoral responsibilities they will face in serving Christ and His kingdom, and to equip Christians for effective service in the church.

## Admission and Administrative Policies

The Masters of Theology (ThM) degree prepares you for initial engagement in doctoral-level research, and can serve as a first step toward teaching in post-secondary theological higher education both nationally and internationally. It provides you with the advanced knowledge and skills needed to research, write, teach, and make a scholarly contribution to the fields of Biblical Studies, Historical Theology, or Systematic Theology.

At the completion of the ThM degree, you will have:

- Researched and written at an advanced level of scholarship under the authority of Scripture.
- Made a scholarly contribution to the field of Biblical Studies, Historical Theology, or Systematic Theology.
- Presented research results in a professional, organized, coherent, and structured manner in both written and oral form.
- Functioned responsibly in the context of a supervisory relationship while exhibiting CBTS's Core Values of being God-centered, Christ-focused, Confessionally-grounded, and Pastorally-concerned.

The program will evaluate your achievement of these objectives through the production and defense of your original work of academic research (100-150 pages for the ThM Research options) under the mentorship of a faculty specialist in your chosen field of study.

For any specific policy questions not addressed in this manual, students are directed to the CBTS Student Handbook for clarification.

# ThM Program Description and Requirements

## ThM Program Description

The CBTS ThM Program has three different options. The ThM in Reformed Baptist Studies is designed for students who earned a masters degree from somewhere other than CBTS. This program focuses on Reformed Baptist Confessional Distinctives, Covenant Theology, and Particular Baptist Historical Theology.

### *ThM in Reformed Baptist Studies*

*Research Methodology (1 hr.)*

*Theological Latin I (3 hr.)*

*Theological Latin II (3 hr.)*

*Biblical Theology (3 hr.)*

*Symbolics (3 hr.)*

*Doctrine of Christ (3 hr.)*

*Eschatology (3 hr.)*

*Reformed Baptist Covenant Theology (2 hr.)*

*Historical Origins of Reformed Baptist Covenant Theology (2 hr.)*

*Baptist Historical Theology (3 hr.)*

*Law & Gospel in Pastoral Ministry (2 hr.)*

*Hyper-Calvinism & the Free Offer of the Gospel (2 hr.)*

**Total 30 hr.**

The ThM in Reformed Baptist Studies (Thesis Option) focuses more on academic writing, while maintaining a strong emphasis on Confessional Reformed Baptist history and theology. It contains many of the same courses as the first track, but also includes the writing and defense of a ThM thesis. This track prepares the student to make a contribution to academia, and prepares the student for future advanced academic studies, while also providing instruction in Confessional Baptist doctrine.

### *ThM in Reformed Baptist Studies (Thesis Option)*

*Research Methodology (1 hr.)*

*Theological Latin I (3 hr.)*

*Theological Latin II (3 hr.)*

*Biblical Theology (3 hr.)*

*Symbolics (3 hr.)*

*Doctrine of Christ (3 hr.)*

*Eschatology (3 hr.)*

*Reformed Baptist Covenant Theology (2 hr.)*

*Historical Origins of Reformed Baptist Covenant Theology (2 hr.)*

*Law & Gospel in Pastoral Ministry (2 hr.)*

*ThM Thesis [75-100 pages] (5 hr.)*

**Total 30 hr.**

The ThM Research option emphasizes high-level academic research concentrated in a particular field. This degree is aimed at students possessing a high familiarity with Confessional Reformed Baptist Theology who aspire to make a significant contribution to the church by lecturing in the classroom and through publication. Students in this track will be paired with a faculty expert in their selected field, who will then guide the student through Research courses. These courses aim to prepare the student to craft a piece of original research (the ThM Thesis), which must be successfully defended before a panel of Faculty Readers.

#### *ThM Research Option*

##### ***Core Classes (7 credit hours)***

*Research Methodology (1 hr.)*

*Theological Latin I (3 hr.)*

*Theological Latin II (3 hr.)*

##### ***Research Classes (15 credit hours)***

*Three 5-hour reading courses in area of specialization. \* (Approx. 2,000 pages assigned by advisor + 30 page paper, per course)*

##### ***Research Class (3 credit hours)***

*One 3-hour reading course in area of specialization. \* (Approx. 1,500 pages assigned by advisor + 20 page paper)*

##### ***\*Areas of Specialized Study***

*Systematic Theology, Historical Theology, Biblical Linguistics, Old Testament Studies, New Testament Studies, Christian Ethics, Covenant Theology.*

##### ***Thesis (5 credit hours)***

*Thesis at least 100-150 pages on a topic approved by the thesis professor.*

***Total 30 hr.***

#### **Admission Requirements for the ThM Program**

- You must complete an online application and pay an application fee.
- You must affirm a personal faith in Christ, be a member in good standing of an evangelical church, and be sweetly submissive to studying the Scriptures from a perspective controlled by the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith. (The student need not subscribe this Confession either to matriculate into or graduate from the Seminary).
- You must provide official transcripts for the master's level degrees and credits you have earned. Those transcripts must reflect
  - A minimum 3.5 GPA for all graduate work.
  - Proficiency in graduate-level theological studies, demonstrated by completion of an accredited Master of Divinity (MDiv), or Master of Theology (ThM) degree.

Applicants with MA may be considered for conditional acceptance on a case by case basis.

- You must meet the following biblical languages admission requirements:
  - Biblical Studies: New Testament (3 semesters of Greek and 1 semesters of Hebrew)
  - Biblical Studies: Old Testament (3 semesters of Hebrew and 1 semesters of Greek)
  - All Other Fields: (4 semesters of Greek and/or Hebrew)
- You must submit a sample major research paper, at least 15 pages in length.
- For those seeking admission to the ThM Research option, you should be prepared to submit a proposed research topic.
- You must participate in a virtual interview with one or more program faculty members.
- Two letters of recommendation (one pastoral, and one academic)

#### Provisional Acceptance

If the GPA from your masters-level qualifying degree falls between 3.0 and 3.5, the program might consider you for admission on a provisional basis if you submit your request in writing accompanied by appropriate rationale.

#### Conditional Acceptance

In certain circumstances, you might be lacking one or more semesters of the biblical language admission requirement, and the program might consider you for admission on a condition basis. If the program admits you conditionally, the Admissions Office will notify you of that fact and will forward a plan to complete your remaining requirement(s). You must satisfy those requirements before you will be permitted to register to begin your Thesis research and writing. Otherwise, you must pause your studies until you have met the requirements.

#### Completion Requirements

- You must successfully complete all required hours of specified coursework with a minimum GPA of 3.0 and with a grade of B or higher for all seminars.
- For students in the ThM Research track, the student must successfully defend his dissertation that is an original work of academic research (100-150 pages) orally before a committee of at least three internal and/or external faculty readers.

## Time Limit

The time limit for the ThM Program is 6 years from the start of the first ThM course. For any extension to be considered, a written request must be submitted to the ThM Program Director and Academic Dean.



## Academic Research and Writing

Academic research and writing are two of the major skills you will develop in your ThM studies. Just as there is a difference in writing at the undergraduate and graduate levels, there is also a difference in writing at the graduate and post-graduate levels. You will learn to distinguish between primary and secondary research and evidence, to build a logical argument that supports a clear claim, to use the body of your written work to present your own research and conclusions, and to use footnotes to carry on conversations with other scholars.

The CBTS ThM program uses the Chicago Manual of Style format (as opposed to APA, Harvard, MLA, or other formats). The primary resource for formatting is K. L Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 9th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018 [ISBN: 9780226430577]. You can find a helpful (but not exhaustive) quick reference guide at <https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/turabian/toc.html>.

In some instances, you might find the *SBL Handbook of Style* helpful, particularly if you are referring to ancient sources. The pages below include information on “Proper Style and Punctuation for Academic Writing.” Another helpful resource on written style is Strunk and White’s book, *The Elements of Style*.

ThM Students can find the CBTS Style Sheet and a Microsoft Word Template on the Student Resources page of the CBTS website. Be sure to use those guidelines and that template for all your CBTS paper assignments.

## Proper Style and Punctuation for Academic Writing

### 1. Style

- a. Write in active voice, in past tense, and in third person. Do not use “one,” “this author,” or “the researcher” as a subject.
- b. Write shorter, simple sentences rather than longer, complex sentences. The more complex a sentence becomes, the more likely it is to lose its clarity.
- c. Begin your sentences with information your readers will find familiar and easy to understand. End your sentences with information that is comparatively new, important, and complex.
- d. Make certain items in a series are parallel grammatically.
- e. Do not begin sentences with conjunctions (including “but,” “and,” “therefore”).
- f. Do not use contractions; write out the uncontracted form (e.g., “cannot,” “is not,” “it is”).

### 2. Punctuation

- a. Separate opening clauses that begin with “If,” “When,” “Since,” and other subordinate conjunctions from the main clause with a comma.
- b. Do not put punctuation before an opening parenthesis. Do not leave a space after an opening parenthesis or before a closing parenthesis.
- c. Use an en-dash between numbers (145–47); use an em-dash without spaces before or after it—like this—to indicate a break in thought. (In Microsoft Word, see Insert > Symbol > Special Characters.)
- d. Do not leave extra space after periods that mark abbreviations.
- e. Place periods and commas inside quotation marks; place semicolons and colons outside.
- f. Place question marks and exclamation marks outside quotation marks unless the question or exclamation occurs within the quotation itself.
- g. Use three periods to indicate an ellipsis, with a space before each period (unless the first dot is the period of an abbreviation or sentence) and a space after the last period if a word follows (. . .).
- h. Do not use f. or ff. with page references. Supply the actual closing page number.
- i. Abbreviate Bible book titles in parenthetical references (e.g., Rom. 3:21–26). Do not abbreviate titles in the body of a paper or when referring to an entire chapter (Romans 3).

### 3. Common Errors to Avoid

- a. Do not use “this” or “it” with an indefinite antecedent; use specific nouns. Write “This fact means . . .” rather than “This means . . .”
- b. Do not split infinitives by inserting an adverb between “to” and the infinitive it governs. Write “to go boldly,” rather than “to boldly go” (with apologies to Gene Roddenberry).
- c. “However” is not a conjunction and does not begin sentences. It may, however, be used within a sentence to mean “nevertheless.”
- d. “Like” is not a conjunction; use “as” instead.
- e. “While” indicates time (“while class is in session”); “although” indicates concession (“although he agrees with this suggestion”).

- f. “May” indicates permission (e.g., “he may leave the room, if he wishes”); “might” indicates possibility (e.g., “he might leave the room later”).
- g. To “infer” is to draw a conclusion from that which is said or written. To “imply” is to suggest something without expressly stating it.
- h. “Farther” refers to distance; “further” refers to time or quantity.
- i. “Methodology” means the theory or study of method. A “method” is a manner or mode of procedure.
- j. Be certain that nouns and pronouns agree in number (e.g., “students . . . their” rather than “a student . . . their”).
- k. In a logical argument the word “feel” is out of place. Use “consider” or “conclude.”
- l. The past tense of the verb “lead” is “led” (not “lead,” which is a metal).

## Theological Research Languages

Students in the ThM Program are required to obtain a working knowledge of a research language. Normally, students will be required to take Theological Latin I & II (3hrs. each). Should a student already possess a working knowledge of Latin, a proficiency exam may be given to grant credit in lieu of taking the courses, at the discretion of the ThM Program director and the ThM Advisor.

Alternative research language credit may be considered by the ThM Program director's discretion, only when recommended by the ThM Advisor. Alternative research languages would only be considered when necessary for the student's particular field of study. Potential alternative research languages include, but are not limited to: German, French, Syriac, Aramaic.

When an alternative research language is requested that is not offered through CBTS, the student will need to find alternative educational offerings of comparable academic rigor to those provided through CBTS.

## Thesis Advisor

For ThM Students applying for the *ThM Research option*, the CBTS ThM Program Director and/or Academic Dean will endeavor to select a suitable ThM Advisor to guide the student through the ThM Thesis coursework, writing, and defense phases.

### Expectations for ThM Research Advisors

#### Phase 1: Guided Readings and Research

- The CBTS ThM advisor, in consultation with the CBTS ThM Program Director (or Academic Committee), will meet with the student at the outset of their Research Course in order to:
  - (1) prepare that semester's reading assignments for the student
  - (2) ensure that each semester's reading and paper(s) conform to the larger goals of the ThM thesis at the end of the program
  - (3) ensure that the ThM Student is achieving their appropriate content area mastery in their selected field
- The ThM Advisor should maintain Consistent, substantial monthly contact with the student (face-to-face meetings, phone, video calls; email alone is unacceptable).
  - This contact should include verbal reporting on reading and research progress, as well as serve to demonstrate that the student is comprehending the assigned reading.
- As the ThM Student progresses through the reading courses, The ThM Advisor should assess the student's familiarity with field specific knowledge areas, taking note of any areas/items with which the student is not conversant. The ThM Advisor should consult with student regarding ways to address deficiencies. If the ThM Advisor is not satisfied with student progress, the Advisor may prohibit the student from proceeding to the next stage. The ThM Mentor must be satisfied with the student's progress.

#### Phase 2: ThM Thesis

- The ThM Advisor will guide student in writing, providing feedback and insight on chapters throughout each semester through consistent monthly contact with each student (face-to-face meetings, phone, video calls; email alone is unacceptable).
- The ThM Advisor determines readiness of the ThM student to defend his/her thesis and notifies the ThM Program Director.
- The ThM Program Director, in consultation with the ThM Advisor, will form the committee and schedule the defense. The student defends dissertation before a committee of at least 3 readers.
- The ThM Advisor will provide the ThM Program Director with a progress report at the end of the semester.

For ThM Students applying for the *ThM in Reformed Baptist Studies (Thesis Option)*, the student will take the appropriate coursework under the ThM Program Director's (or designee's) supervision. At the conclusion of the coursework, the ThM Program Director (or designee) will serve as the student's ThM Advisor, guiding the student through the Thesis research, writing, and defense process.

## ThM Thesis Defense

When your mentor believes you are ready to defend your completed Thesis, the ThM Program Director will solicit any necessary additional readers, likely existing CBTS faculty. The Thesis defense committee will be comprised of the ThM Advisor, the ThM Program Director, and at least one other reader.

The defense committee will review the penultimate draft of your Thesis and provide feedback prior to the defense. Then, you will have time to revise your work before the defense. At the defense, you will have the opportunity to provide a brief overview of your work before you answer questions from the committee members. The committee will make one of four recommendations:

- To pass with no revisions
- To pass with minor revisions
- To pass with major revisions
- To fail

If the committee recommends minor revisions, you will make the revisions and submit your revised Thesis to your mentor for approval. He will then submit it to the ThM Program Director with a grade recommendation. If the committee recommends major revisions, you will meet before the committee a second time after you have made the necessary revisions to repeat the defense process. If the committee recommends failure, you should consult with the ThM Program Director regarding your options.