



## Master of Theology (ThM) Program

This course of study expands and deepens a student's abilities in ministry. It is designed for students who possess a Master of Divinity degree (or its equivalent) to help them take their learning to a higher level.

It can be used as a terminal degree (especially the classes-only track), or as a transitional degree (especially the classes-plus-thesis track) for those wishing to pursue additional graduate studies, particularly a PhD program in religion or theology.

### Objectives

You will learn to:

- Exegete individual passages of Scripture accurately, employing understanding of the original languages, historical circumstances, and literary and theological relationships
- Articulate the major issues of faith and life that the church has confronted throughout its history
- Articulate confessional Reformed theology on exegetical, biblical, and theological grounds
- Systematize exegetical, historical and theological data into a consistent and coherent theology and explain how theology applies to personal and church beliefs and actions.
- Demonstrate leadership abilities in ecclesiastical and academic environments, especially in relating these truths to the church today.
- Respond with biblical discernment to contemporary trends in biblical interpretation and apply a sound Christian worldview to contemporary cultural issues that impact the church today.
- Understand, analyze, and respond to current trends and crises in specialized disciplines and contribute new vistas of thought to these issues.
- Demonstrate an ability to apply biblical and theological studies to ministry, whether pastoral or academic.
- Demonstrate academic competence in the chosen field of study, including proficiency in the methods and tools of theological research and writing by conducting graduate level research and evidencing skills of critical analysis.

### Admission Requirements

Applications for admission to the ThM degree program at PRTS are considered once every two months. Although there are no deadlines for the ThM application, it is recommended that applications be received by the Admission Office by **May 1** for the fall semester and by **September 1** for the spring semester. Applications received after either of these dates will be

considered, but we cannot ensure that immigration forms for international students will be satisfactorily processed should the applicant be admitted.

Application requirements for the ThM program include:

- A completed online application form.
- Two letters of recommendation: an ecclesiastical letter of recommendation from the pastor or consistory (i.e., session or council) of the church of which the applicant is a member, and an academic letter of recommendation from a professor (preferably in the area specified as the major for the ThM degree), under whose guidance the applicant has pursued studies.
- Evidence of the possession of a Master of Divinity Degree or its equivalent (evidenced by official transcripts). If, at the time of application, the applicant has not completed his previous degree work, any admission to PRTS would be conditional on the completion of the degree. Evidence of this degree should be presented prior to enrolling in any ThM coursework. Official transcripts of all academic work beyond high school must be sent directly to the seminary; they are not to come from the applicant unless supplied in sealed envelopes. If more than one college or institution was attended, transcripts from each institution must be sent.
- Application essay. All applicants must submit a short essay (250–500 words) explaining why they are applying to PRTS.
- An academic writing sample, preferably a research paper previously submitted in a graduate-level course. This sample may be a previously written paper, article, or essay that demonstrates proper citation methods and ability to construct, in English, a graduate-level paper.
- TOEFL or IELTS results. All ESL (English as a Second Language) students are required to submit their TOEFL or IELTS score. PRTS requires a minimum of 85 on the internet-based TOEFL. The IELTS equivalent required is 6.5. The PRTS reporting code is 0368.
- Application fee of \$50. The application fee is non-refundable.

Each applicant:

- is subject to all the admission and registration regulations of the institution;
- is responsible to determine whether a current institution will accept credit earned at PRTS, if desired;
- must understand that falsification of any part of an application may result in cancellation of admission and/or registration at the institution;
- if transferring from another seminary, must include with the application form an official transcript of their current seminary work, syllabi of courses requesting to be transferred, and an academic catalog from that institution.

## **Residency Requirement**

At least one-half of the coursework towards the ThM must be completed through on-campus classes (modular or intensive-style courses qualify as on-campus courses). As many of the ThM courses are offered via modular format (usually intensive week-long courses), this means the

accepted ThM student does not have to relocate to complete the ThM program. Completion of the program will require, however, a number of week-long trips back and forth to Grand Rapids.

Up to one-half of the coursework may be completed through a combination of: 1) live-streamed courses (i.e., courses that virtually “meet” synchronously with on-campus classes); 2) independent studies (a maximum of two courses can be taken as independent study); or 3) transfer of credit from another institution.

## **Areas of Concentration**

ThM students will choose a concentration in one of three areas:

- Biblical Studies
- Reformation and Post-Reformation Theology
- Systematic Theology

Each of these concentrations is designed for either pastors desiring advanced training beyond the MDiv, or students desiring to pursue further graduate studies. Students choosing a ThM in Biblical Studies must demonstrate competency in Hebrew and Greek, having completed a minimum of one year of biblical Hebrew and one year of biblical Greek. It is particularly the purpose of this concentration to sharpen exegetical skills, to learn to employ effectively the discipline of Biblical Theology for scriptural study and exposition, and to be able to defend the integrity and authority of Scripture.

## **ThM Requirements and Time-frame of Completion**

All credit hours for the ThM program must be completed within six (6) years of matriculation; any exception must be approved by the president and academic dean.

The ThM degree can be earned following one of two tracks: either the classes-only track, or the classes-plus-thesis track. The first is designed for those intending the degree to be terminal; the second for those intending the degree to be transitional to further graduate study (such as a PhD).

Both tracks of the ThM require a total of 30 credits; the requirements for each track are as follows:

### **Classes-only Track (30 Credits)**

The classes-only track of the ThM requires the following for completion:

- Research Methodology course (either BS800 or CH800) – 3 credits
- At least 18 credits of coursework (six courses) selected from courses offered in chosen concentration
- Up to 9 credits of coursework (three courses) selected from courses offered outside of chosen concentration
- Minimum GPA of 3.0

- Successful completion and passing of comprehensive exam at end of program.
- Completion of program within six years of matriculation.

### **Classes-plus-thesis Track (30 Credits)**

The classes-plus-thesis track of the ThM requires the following for completion:

- Research Methodology course (either BS800 or CH800) – 3 credits
- At least 15 credits of coursework (five courses) selected from courses offered in chosen concentration
- Up to 6 credits of coursework (two courses) selected from courses offered outside of chosen concentration
- Completion of six-credit thesis (enrolled in final semester of program)
- Minimum GPA of 3.0
- Successful completion and passing of comprehensive exam at end of program.
- Completion of program within six years of matriculation.

**NB:** All accepted ThM students are first admitted to the classes-only track of the ThM. If the student desires during the program to pursue a ThM by the thesis-plus-classes track, the student may apply to the faculty for permission to do so providing the successful completion of the Research Methodology course and at least one other three-credit ThM course. See the “Thesis Requirements” section below for more information.

### **Qualifying Credits toward the ThM**

ThM credits can be earned as follows:

- Completion of paired ThM and MA/MDiv courses. ThM students choosing paired courses will follow separate syllabus requirements than the MA/MDiv student. These courses are listed under the ThM courses section of the catalog.
- Completion of ThM-specific courses, or courses paired with the PhD program. ThM-level classes (or ThM/PhD classes) will be offered in the above-mentioned concentrations (see course descriptions below). Usually these classes will be administered as modular courses, and will typically meet for an intensive week of classes.
- The thesis: Students accepted by the faculty into the ThM by classes and thesis track will write a 100–200 page thesis on a topic related to the student’s concentration, and approved by the appropriate faculty supervisor. The thesis is valued at 6 credits.

In order to maximize benefit to resident ThM students attending PRTS on scholarships, all such students are expected to audit one MDiv course a semester, the course to be chosen in consultation with the registrar. They are also encouraged to attend at least one practice preaching session a week and participate in the subsequent discussion. There will be no charge for auditing these courses.

### **Thesis Requirements**

The following steps outline the requirements for those matriculating in the thesis-track program as of the fall semester of the 2013–14 academic year:

1. All students accepted into the ThM program are accepted into the course-based track of the ThM. In order to enter the thesis-based track of the ThM, the student, after successfully completing the Research Methodology course and at least one other course with a grade of “B” or higher, must make application to the academic dean by presenting a 2-page proposal of the thesis topic. The academic dean will then bring this initial proposal to the entire faculty for consideration.
2. If the initial proposal is accepted by the faculty, the registrar will be informed and the student will then be enrolled in the 6-credit thesis and be assigned a thesis advisor; in most cases this enrollment in the 6-credit thesis will occur in the student’s final semester. Financial obligations for enrollment in the thesis will be treated as enrollment in any other course.
3. The student will next present to the thesis advisor a 10-page prospectus of the thesis which must include: justification of the thesis, delimitations, review of literature relevant to topic, a synopsis of chapter development detailing the overall methodology, and outline of thesis. Much of this can serve as introductory material for the final draft.
4. The student must present his or her thoughts and research in an acceptable style and format. The formatting is according to Kate L. Turabian: *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.).
5. The student should submit chapters to his or her advisor as they are completed for input and possible revisions.
6. Deadlines for graduation or conferral of degree:
  - The student must submit the 100–200 page thesis to his or her faculty advisor by the last Monday in September (for a December conferral of the degree) or by the first Monday in February (for a May graduation); at this time a second reader will be assigned.
  - The final copy (in electronic format – MS Word) must be presented to the registrar and head librarian no later than the last Monday in November (for a December conferral of the degree) or the first Monday in April (for a May graduation). This will allow time for the library staff to check for proper formatting (Turabian 8<sup>th</sup> ed.) and for any final corrections to be made. Be sure to read the [PRTS Guidelines](#) for submitting theses to the librarian.
  - Failure to reach either of the above two deadlines will result in a delay of the student’s degree conferral or graduation.
7. Thesis advisor submits final grade of thesis to the registrar.
8. After the thesis is submitted to the librarian, it will be proofed according to Turabian 8<sup>th</sup> edition requirements. Necessary corrections will be submitted back to the student.
9. Once final edits / corrections are made, the librarian will have two bound copies made, one for the student (courtesy of the seminary) and one for the library collection. Additional copies may be purchased for \$15.00 ea.
10. Student may be asked to submit thesis to the Theological Research Exchange Network (TREN) depending on the quality of writing and research. However, final decision on TREN submission rests with the student.

## **Comprehensive Exam**

Each ThM student, matriculating in the program as of the fall semester of the 2013–14 academic year, must take a comprehensive examination at the end of the program. This comprehensive exam will focus primarily on the student’s particular concentration. Deadlines for passing the comprehensive examination are stipulated in the academic calendar.

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To begin your application, go to <https://prts.edu/future-students/apply-now/>