

Master of Theology (Research)

Course coordinator: Dr Robert McIver

Course code 2011

The Master of Theology (Research) is a research masters degree offered by the Faculty of Theology. Offered continuously since 1999, the Master of Theology (Research) is a research degree designed for graduates who have demonstrated above average academic ability and whose previous undergraduate study shows evidence of ability in research and writing and allows them to pursue at greater depth a selected aspect for focus on religion, theology, ministry and/or evangelism.

The primary aim of the Master of Theology (Research) course is to provide continuing academic education at postgraduate level with particular focus on the development of competence in research skills. The course is designed to provide graduates with recognised qualifications to enable them to teach ministry and theology at secondary and higher educational levels. They also would have the necessary knowledge and skills to pursue further study and research at the doctoral level.

The focus of the course is on developing research skills, critically evaluating findings, and integrating academic and professional concerns. The course is designed to foster growth in the following areas: developing and refining research questions, accessing, reviewing and summarising relevant data and literature, designing suitable research projects, developing writing and editing skills, and summarising and presenting their findings. Implementation of the course is through one-on-one interaction between the supervisor and student.

Duration

Full-time candidates normally conclude their work in no fewer than three semesters and no more than three years. Students studying in the part-time mode should complete the course in no fewer than three years and no more than six years.

Mode of delivery

Full-time or part-time on campus

Full-time or part-time by distance education

Abbreviation

MTh (Research)

Accreditation

The course is accredited by the New South Wales Department of Education and Training.

Entry requirements

The MTh (Research) builds on four years of appropriate undergraduate study such as religion, theology or pastoral studies, with a minimum pass level of high credit or an equivalent level of studies. Alternatively admission may be gained through:

- a Graduate Diploma in Theology with a minimum pass level of high credit; or
- the equivalent of one year of full-time postgraduate study in religion, theology or pastoral studies such as four postgraduate level subjects or their equivalent at a minimum pass level of high credit.

Research potential is normally demonstrated by including with the application form two major assignments submitted to meet requirements of the previously completed undergraduate degree, the honours degree, or the year of postgraduate coursework.

Alternate entry requirements

In exceptional circumstances admission may be based on the verifying of evidence of such other academic and research qualifications as the Research Committee may approve. Such qualifications must have been passed with a minimum pass level of high credit, must be directly relevant to the proposed topic of research for the MTh (Research) award, and must comply with Avodale College's policy on advanced standing.

Applicants whose previous academic qualifications lack the pass levels stipulated above for admission may qualify for admission upon completion, at high credit level, of two postgraduate subjects chosen in consultation with the Course Coordinator. Upon successful completion of these two subjects the applicant will be granted provisional admission. Regular admission can be achieved by passing six credit points of MTh Research Methods at high credit level.

For those students intending to carry out research in primary sources, knowledge of the relevant languages must be acquired and demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Course Coordinator. Also, a knowledge of relevant fields such as scripture, history, hermeneutics, comparative religion, psychology, sociology and statistics may be required depending on the topic selected.

Advanced standing and credit transfer

Candidates who have completed higher education studies by research prior to the lodgement of their application may submit an application for advanced standing. Determination will be made on the basis of equivalence of the candidate's:

- prior award to the requirements of the MTh (Research)
- time spent in obtaining or studying towards the prior award;
- level of the prior award;
- theoretical level of work already completed;
- prior experience as a professional in the field.

Research topics

While preliminary discussion of a suitable thesis topic may begin between a potential student and any member of the Faculty of Theology, the approval of a provisional thesis topic can only be made for students who have enrolled in THES64100 Research Methodology IA and THES64200 Research Methodology IB, and requires the recommendation of the Dean of the Faculty, the Faculty of Theology Research and Teaching Committee, and the Research Committee.

English language proficiency requirements

Courses at Avondale College are delivered in the English language. In order to complete the courses successfully, applicants from a country where English is not the first language must demonstrate proficiency in English in one of the following ways:

- provide documentary evidence that a significant part of the education was conducted in the English language; *or*
- successful completion of at least two years of tertiary study conducted in the English language in Australia or another country in which English is the official language within the last two years; *or*
- provide documentary evidence that an IELTS score of 7.0 has been achieved with no individual band score less than 6.5.

Course structure

The Master of Theology (Research) is comprised of two coursework units (12 credit points); a thesis proposal (12 credit points); and a major thesis (48 credit points). An example of a full-time load is outlined below:

Sem	Units	
1	THRE60100 Understanding Theological Research (6 cr pts)	THRE60200 Research Methodologies in Theological Research (6 cr pts)
1	THRE60300 Research Proposal (12 cr pts)	
2	THRE61000 Master of Theology (Research) Thesis (48 cr pts)	
3	Master of Theology (Research) Thesis—ongoing	

Normally the part-time student load is 50% of the full-time load.

Consistent with a research master's degree outlined by the Australian Qualification Framework, the Master of Theology (Research) graduate will have:

- a high degree of mastery in their chosen area of study in theology;
- advanced skills to conduct and evaluate scholarship and research;
- creativity and flexibility in the application of knowledge and skills to new situations; and

- the ability to solve complex problems and think rigorously and independently.

Students will have developed research skills that allow them to differentiate known from unknown knowledge; critically analyse the existing knowledge; understand the dimension of the unknown and from this understanding focus on a manageable field of endeavour; understand and use the various ways of locating new knowledge; select a methodology appropriate to the purpose of their individual study; collect and accumulate data pertinent to the research questions; merge new knowledge with existing concepts; interpret and make sense of new knowledge; and communicate the findings of this process to assist others in merging the new knowledge into existing conceptual schema in a field of theology, and envisage the implications of the findings.

Progress report

Two progress reports are required each year on 30 April and 30 September. Candidates complete these progress reports on the form provided on the Avondale College website: www.avondale.edu.au and submit them to the Research Services Officer for consideration by the Research Committee.

International students

Overseas applicants are required to satisfy the Australian Government visa requirements (see the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) website at www.immi.gov.au/study).

The MTh (Research) thesis

The thesis is expected to demonstrate in less than 50,000 words (approximately 200 pages) originality, critical insight, and a capacity for independent research. A contribution to knowledge is expected. The thesis should put forward a clearly-argued and well-supported position for a new result, idea, theory or practice. It should be set out and remain within clear boundaries.

The thesis is supervised by an appropriately-qualified research supervisor appointed by the Vice-President (Administration and Research) after consultation with the Faculty Dean and the Research Committee. The supervisor is responsible for determining that the student has access to adequate library and other relevant resources, and for timetabling and conducting a series of supervisory sessions at which the student reports on work in progress, and discusses and receives approval for any modifications to previously-agreed strategy and procedure. Supervisors will be chosen whose current or past research directly or indirectly overlaps the proposed thesis topic.

Assessment of the MTh (Research) thesis will be by two external examiners. The Research Committee, on advice from the Faculty of Theology Research and Teaching

Committee, will appoint two external examiners, based on their recognised academic and professional competence in the field of the thesis. Suitable persons may be nominated as examiners by the supervisor and must be accompanied by an adequate justification.

Examiners prepare reports on the thesis which include one of the following assessments: pass; pass with modifications; fail. The reports are presented to the Research Committee. In the event that major disagreements between examiners exists, the supervisor prepares a report for the Research Committee which assesses the extent of thesis modification required in order to satisfy the examiners' expectations. The supervisor will assist the candidate in making revisions, and will report back to the Research Committee when revisions are completed. Examiners' reports will be made available to the candidate.

Thesis binding

The thesis shall be bound in navy binding upon which lettering will be in gold.

Academic regalia

The standard black masters gown is overlaid with a steel blue hood. The mortar board incorporates a tassel which is worn on the left front side.