



Master of Theology

PROGRAM HANDBOOK

2026-2027



Santa Clara
Jesuit School of Theology

Welcome to the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University!

JST-SCU is a premier Jesuit theology center and the graduate school of theology of Santa Clara University that forms women and men from across the world to lead and minister in the 21st-century global synodal Church. We bridge rigorous academic contextual theology with lived realities of faith and equip lay and religious students with synodal tools of spirituality, discernment, dialogue, and collaboration to make a difference in the world. In keeping with our [strategic priorities](#), students and faculty from across the globe converge at JST-SCU to engage in its academically rigorous, socially engaged, contextually diverse, and spiritually vibrant community.

JSTSCU is also an ecclesiastical faculty accredited and approved by the Vatican Dicastery for Culture and Education to prepare Jesuits, lay men and women, religious women and men, and diocesan priests for vocation, ministry, service, and career in the Church, society, and academy. With a current student body from 40 countries, our global community benefits from the wisdom of one another's experiences in preparation for ministry leadership and service to the Church and the world.

Located in the heart of Silicon Valley, Santa Clara University's vision and mission are firmly rooted in the Jesuit, Catholic tradition to educate citizens and leaders of competence, conscience, and compassion and build a more humane, just, and sustainable world. Santa Clara (www.scu.edu) blends high-tech innovation with a social consciousness grounded in the Jesuit educational tradition and engaged with various communities to foster an entrepreneurial mindset in view of helping shape the next generation of leaders and global thinkers.

Besides institutional and academic strengths in systematic theology, biblical studies, sacraments and liturgy, moral theology, social ethics, inter-religious dialogue, and Christian spirituality, JST-SCU has recently enhanced expertise in the following areas of study:

- Ignatian spirituality, including classes, research, and practicums; four spiritual directors trained in Ignatian spirituality are available for Jesuit students.
- Biblical studies, with an emphasis on textual knowledge and contextual interpretation.
- Social ethics, with expertise in reconciliation, ecology, family systems, and post-colonial perspectives.
- Theology of synodality, with focus on the understanding, knowledge, and practice of synodality in the global Church.

JST-SCU's small size allows our world-renowned faculty to personally engage our students in the highest quality of academic excellence. The Jesuit Community at JST offers an intercultural experience of friendship in the Lord that provides a conducive environment for those in formation. We are deeply committed to preparing Jesuits and ministers for service in a global, synodal Church. A strong academic and ministerial formation is key to what the Society of Jesus can offer our Church and world in the second quarter of the 21st century.



For U.S. and international students, JST-SCU offers the Master of Divinity (MDiv); Master of Theological Studies (MTS); Master of Theology (ThM); and Ecclesiastical degrees at the Bachelor (STB), Licentiate (STL), and Doctoral (STD) levels in Sacred Theology.

- Our first cycle includes Jesuits and other students from all over the world, and the MDiv and STB are designed to prepare Jesuits for priestly ministry in a variety of contexts and lay students for dedicated church service. The Bay Area provides rich opportunities for ministerial and pastoral formation in various cultures and languages and socio economic conditions. This intercultural context counts as a distinct strength of our program
- The MTS offers students a foundation in theology and ministry, and the ThM allows students to explore a particular aspect of theology through classwork and a project or thesis.
- The STL allows Jesuits, diocesan priests and religious women and men to do serious academic research in a particular area of theology. Students work with a faculty member with expertise in their thesis topic, providing strong support across the spectrum of theological disciplines.
- Our STD program works with candidates moving directly from the licentiate as well as those who return to further studies to prepare for their assignments in universities and formation centers around the world. Here our Jesuit and lay faculty are at their best, offering strong mentoring and support—with an eye to finishing the degree on time!

For Jesuits and others who would like to come to JST-SCU for a period of academic engagement and spiritual renewal, we offer a Renewal Program for one or two semesters, led by an experienced spiritual guide. Renewal participants enhance the life of the whole community, contributing insight, wisdom, and depth in the courses they take, sharing the breadth and depth of their ministerial experience in formal and informal settings.

JST-SCU is marked by a strong diversity of its community of scholars, staff, and students. While classes require sufficient English proficiency, our professors speak French, Italian, German, Portuguese, Swahili, Vietnamese, and Spanish, among other languages, creating an environment conducive to global theological scholarship. To better serve the needs of our diverse student body, we offer tutoring and writing assistance and coaching for international students (including Jesuits) to help them develop the skills needed for academic writing and research.

We invite you to make your distinctive contribution to our academic and faith community, as together we enliven faith, promote reconciliation, labor for justice, and participate in God's mercy.

Welcome to JST-SCU!

Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, S.J.
Dean, Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University

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ThM Program Worksheet, ThM Specific Forms, and Registration Related Forms are all available on the [Office of the Registrar page](#) under “Forms.”

I. Program Guidelines

Overview

The Master of Theology (ThM) program is a one-year academic degree program in advanced theological studies. Students requesting admission to the ThM program must have an earned Master of Divinity (MDiv), Master of Theological Studies (MTS), or Master of Arts in Theology (MA). The ThM is intended to focus students toward an area of specialized interest. Students will choose to concentrate in one of the following areas: Biblical Studies; Theology and Spirituality; Theological Ethics; and Culture, History and the Arts. In keeping with the intellectual tradition and apostolic priority of the Society of Jesus, the program cultivates a critical fidelity to the Roman Catholic tradition, in service of a faith that does justice. It enables students to understand the interplay between faith and culture, preparing them to address theological and pastoral issues that emerge in diverse cultural contexts.

Goals and Objectives

Institutional Learning Goals

1. Students will gain a broad foundation in Christian theology, with a focus on the Roman Catholic tradition.
2. Students will demonstrate a critically-informed approach to faith that promotes social justice for the common good, especially for the benefit of those in greatest need.
3. Students will recognize the interplay between faith and culture in addressing issues that emerge in diverse cultural contexts.

ThM Student Learning Outcomes

The ThM program offers students one year of advanced theological study beyond the MDiv, MTS, or MA programs and specialized knowledge in a chosen concentration.

ThM graduates will:

1. Demonstrate advanced knowledge and research methods in their selected area of concentration.
2. Apply advanced theological competencies in their appraisal of theological questions and pastoral issues in light of their selected area of concentration.
3. Assess theological and pastoral issues in the socio-cultural contexts in which they emerge.

Advanced Standing

Students who have taken graduate courses in theology not more than six years prior to registration may petition to transfer coursework for advanced standing in the ThM program. Such petitions may be included with the Application for Admission or may be submitted during the first semester of study at JST. No more than six semester units of transfer credit can be applied to the ThM program at JST. These units must be from courses which cohere with the courses taken at JST as a concentration.

No units will be transferred that have already been counted toward another degree. No units will be considered for transfer that are not from regionally accredited institutions of higher learning or were not attained at a graduate level (at least 4000- level), or received a grade of less than B (3.0).

Students formerly in the JST MDiv or STB programs may petition to transfer courses completed during the program provided that the courses were completed in the final year of the program, were taken at an advanced level (at least 4000- level) with a grade of B- or better, and were not counted toward the MDiv or STB degree. See the [Registrar page](#) for the form to Transfer Coursework for Transfer of Credit and Advanced Standing.

Degree Requirements

The ThM program requires the completion of 18 semester units of coursework (six three-unit courses) at the 4000- level or above, and a thesis (75 pages) or a project of comparable scope. A full-time student may expect to complete the ThM program in one academic year, but must complete the program within two calendar years from the date of first registration in the program.

Students in all degree programs must maintain a 3.0 (B) Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) to graduate. A grade of B- or better is necessary in all courses used to satisfy a requirement for all JST degree programs. Except for the Research Practicum (FE-4402), students in the ThM program are not permitted to take courses as Pass / No Pass. However, students may petition the Associate Dean for permission to take a course as Pass / No Pass on an individual basis. See [Academic Policies and Procedures](#) for additional information on grades.

Additional Course, Language, and Thesis / Project Information

- All courses must contribute directly to the student's area of concentration.
- ThM students who choose a pastoral emphasis may apply a maximum of six units of field education or special reading course project work toward the 18 units of coursework.
- Students may upgrade the course content and assignments of a 2000- or 3000- level course to meet the ThM advanced course requirements. In general, a research paper of 15 pages or more is required. See the [Registrar page](#) for the Course Upgrade Form.

- Within the 18 units of coursework, students must take RS-2092 Culture, Context and Lived Religion, upgraded to the 4000- level (three units), or an equivalent course approved by the Associate Dean to meet the institutional and program goals and outcomes related to culture.
- Language requirements may be assigned at the beginning of the ThM program as appropriate to the area of concentration. Coursework to meet language requirements will not be credited to degree requirements.
- Students must register for six units of MA-5000 for thesis or project work in their final semester.
- During their final semester of residence in the ThM program, or whenever it is offered in the school year, students must register for one credit of FE-4402 Research Practicum.
- The ThM thesis / project proposal is due no later than the last day of class in the semester prior to expected graduation. See the [Registrar page](#) for the ThM Thesis Proposal form.
- The completed ThM thesis / project must be submitted to the registrar's office by the first Monday in May for spring graduation.

Concurrent STL / ThM

Students who complete an STL degree can also receive a ThM degree concurrently by submitting a request to the Associate Dean. Requests to receive the ThM concurrently may be made at the time of application or no later than the third semester of enrollment. Students seeking the concurrent degrees must also take ST-3999 STL/THM Seminar, a one-unit course, in the spring semester of their final year to explore theological 'publics' for the ThM (civil) and STL (ecclesiastical) degrees, respectively.

Continuing Registration

ThM students are considered to be in continuing registration once they have completed their coursework and the required units for the final thesis or project. Continuing registration students will be required to register for nine units of MA-5002 and pay the continuing registration fee in order to maintain their full-time student status.

Students must file their thesis or project by the filing deadline for their intended graduation semester in order to avoid having to pay tuition for an additional semester. See [Academic Policies and Procedures](#) for additional information on continuing registration.

Satisfactory Academic Progress While In Continuing Registration Status

In general, satisfactory academic progress for ThM students is governed by Academic Policies and Procedures. The following policy pertains only to students who are in continuing registration status.

While a student is in continuing registration status for the ThM program, the thesis director must certify by the last week of classes in each semester that the student is making satisfactory academic progress. This determination will be based on: (a) the depth of contact between the student and the director; (b) the student's adherence to a research plan, if applicable; and/or (c) the student's progress in drafting, editing and polishing the thesis.

If the student is not making satisfactory academic progress, they will be placed on academic probation. Students on academic probation are not eligible for institutional aid from the school.

Students who are on academic probation will be permitted to enroll in one additional semester of continuing registration in order to make progress toward their degree. If any student does not make satisfactory progress during the semester on academic probation, the Associate Dean will consult with the student's director to determine whether to dismiss the student for academic reasons or to continue the student and on what terms. The student, the director, and the Registrar will be informed of the outcome of the determination.

Graduation

JST has two graduation dates each academic year:

- May – for students who finish during the fall semester or by the spring May deadline
- September / October – for students who finish in late May through the summer

Note regarding Commencement Ceremony: The only students permitted to “walk” in the commencement ceremony in May are those who have finished or will finish all requirements for their degree before or during the spring term.

II. ThM Thesis or Project Guidelines

Thesis or Project Process

Committee: The thesis / project will ordinarily be directed by a committee of two people. The thesis / project director must be a member of the JST full-time permanent faculty. The director should also serve as the academic advisor for most of the program, including the coursework.

The second reader will ordinarily also be a member of the JST faculty. Requests for exception should be addressed to the ThM Program Director.

A third reader may be added if appropriate, especially for pastoral or regional expertise relevant to a project. In the event that there is a serious disagreement between the director and reader over the quality of the thesis or project, the Program Director will appoint a third reader to arbitrate the matter.

Proposal: The ThM proposal should include the [ThM Thesis Proposal form](#) as a cover sheet. Attached to it should be a proposal of no more than six pages in length that presents the student's thesis statement or project focus and intended work. The ThM thesis / project proposal is due no later than the last day of class in the semester prior to expected graduation.

Grade for Thesis / Project: The student must complete the [ThM Grade Report form](#) and provide a copy to each member of the thesis / project committee along with the thesis or project. Each committee member must select the appropriate grade, sign the form, and return it directly to the Registrar's Office.

If the thesis / project has been approved with minor corrections, the student must have the corrected thesis / project approved by the thesis / project director before submitting it to the JST Registrar's Office.

If, in the opinion of a reader, major revisions are required, that reader should communicate directly with the thesis / project director and student until the thesis or project is acceptable. Grade forms should be submitted to the Registrar's Office only after the thesis / project is deemed acceptable.

Readers should feel free to contact the student's thesis / project director for clarification or questions, but it is the responsibility of the student to fulfill all requirements.

Formatting of Thesis / Project: The ThM thesis / project should be formatted in accordance with library specifications, using the most recent edition of *Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, by Kate Turabian.

Thesis / Project Registration and Deadline: Students must register for six units of MA-5000 for thesis / project work in their final semester. The ThM thesis / project must be graded, corrected, signed and submitted to the JST Registrar by the first Monday in May for spring graduation.

Thesis Guidelines

The minimum length of the thesis is 75 pages.

Thesis Proposal Guidelines

The thesis proposal should be no more than six pages in length, including the title page and bibliography, and include the following:

1. **Title Page:** See a sample of the required title page on the [Submissions Guidelines for all Master's Theses and Doctoral Dissertations](#).
2. **Thesis Statement:** The thesis statement should appear as a single sentence, accompanied by a brief explanatory paragraph. This allows you to establish the subject matter of the thesis in a precise manner.

The thesis statement may be presented in terms of a problem that you wish to address, a question you wish to answer, or a contribution you wish to make to an ongoing discussion.

3. **Reasons for Writing the Thesis:** The reasons for writing the thesis can be stated in terms of the goals you wish to accomplish, the theological resources you wish to employ, or the ground you wish to break. This section of the proposal allows you to show where your work fits into a larger, ongoing theological conversation.

While the thesis statement identifies the subject of your thesis in a focused manner, the statement of reasons for writing the thesis demonstrates the relevance of your project for a wider audience.

4. **Synopsis of Intended Work:** A typical ThM thesis consists of three chapters and introduction; the synopsis of your proposed thesis involves a chapter-by-chapter overview of the argument you wish to develop. Each chapter should be described in no more than one paragraph. The synopsis illuminates the logic that will give your project its structure; it also allows you to substantiate your thesis statement.
5. **Table of Contents:** The one-page table of contents lists the chapters and chapter subdivisions of your proposed thesis. It should enable your director and reader to see clearly the logic of the whole work. It should also display the various parts of the

project in relation to the whole, thus establishing a sense of proper proportions and limits.

6. **Bibliography:** The thesis proposal should conclude with a working bibliography that contains the works you intend to consult to begin your research. The bibliography is likely to expand as you continue your work.

Style Guidelines for Thesis

Turabian is the writing style for GTU theses and dissertations (i.e., the most recent edition of *Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, by Kate Turabian). Approval of style is the responsibility of the candidate's director.

Spacing: Double spacing is required for the main body of the work except in those places where conventional usage calls for single spacing (e.g., footnotes, indented quotations, tables, etc.).

Font: The type size should be 12 point. Type used for charts, drawings, graphs, tables, footnotes, etc., may differ according to format and space requirements, but should be at least 10 point.

Margins: Margin requirements apply to all pages, whether text, illustration, charts, graphs, or other content. Be sure to check the margins not only on pages with text, but also pages with charts, graphs, or images.

Left: 1 1/2 inches (When a hard copy of the thesis/project is bound, the left-hand margin will fall into a gutter; for this reason the left margin is larger than the others.)

Top, right, and bottom: 1 inch

Page numbers: Page numbers must be at least 1/2 inch from edge.

Filing Guidelines for Thesis

The final, graded, corrected, and signed original of the thesis and one copy, also with original signatures, must be submitted to the JST Registrar's Office. All JST-SCU degree candidates who must submit a thesis for their program must submit two archival quality copies of their thesis (for the GTU library), and one additional copy (for SCU) in electronic PDF format to the JST Registrar's Office. For those students writing theses focusing on matters pertaining to African nations, the electronic PDF format copy will also be sent to the two Jesuit African theologates by the Registrar.

After all of the readers have approved the thesis and the GTU Reference Librarian has approved the thesis format and paper, then the original and one copy of the thesis (both with

original signatures) must be submitted to the JST Registrar's Office. These will become the bound copies to be kept in the GTU Library. Do not bind the thesis yourself. A Thesis Binding Fee will be charged to the student's account in the semester of graduation.

Project Guidelines

Nature of the Project

The project should integrate academic study done in coursework with pastoral practice. Due to the diversity of pastoral situations, this may take different forms. In all cases, the knowledge displayed and the methods employed in the execution of the project should be equivalent to what is expected for the ThM thesis.

Once the written component of the project is received, the committee will determine whether an oral examination (one hour maximum) is advisable. Faculty will not be expected to be available in the summer for consultation on the project.

The completed project will be accompanied by written materials, the nature and length of which will be determined by the committee.

Project Proposal Guidelines

1. **Scope & Nature** (½ page): Briefly describe the scope and nature of your project. Within what social, historical, and/or cultural context is your work situated? Who or what are the subject(s) of your study?
2. **Research Question**
3. **Thesis Statement**
4. **Structure and Methodology** (1-2 pages): How is the project organized and why? How will your project meet its goals? What scholarly resources and concepts are you drawing from, and why? Methodology should comprise a large portion of your proposal.
5. **Significance** (1 paragraph): Briefly state why you are doing this project and why it is important to your intended audience. What specifically will the recipients of your work gain from it?
6. **Short Bibliography** (1 page)

Filing Guidelines for Project

Students doing the ThM project are expected to file one copy of the final, graded, corrected, and signed project with the JST Registrar's Office in electronic PDF format. The copy should be prepared in accordance with the [GTU Guidelines](#) regarding paper, pagination, and style requirements.

Thesis / Project Filing Deadlines

- Spring graduates: The filing deadline is the first Monday in May.
- September / October graduates: The filing deadline is the final day of the fall add / drop period.
- Fall registrants completing before the spring semester: The filing deadline is the final day of the spring add / drop period. These students will receive their degree in May.

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