

Sequence of STL Program

A student must complete three related but distinct requirements to graduate from the STL program. The student must:

1. Satisfy the course work;
2. Propose a satisfactory thesis topic and draft an acceptable thesis;
3. Secure approval of 10 *Lectio coram* topics and competently lecture on one of those topics.

Note: Although the *Lectio coram* is a distinct requirement for the STL degree, its timing is dependent in part upon the recognized completion of the thesis. The student is advised to anticipate this coordination requirement carefully.

1. Course work

A student enrolled full-time who is able to devote most of his or her time and energies to academic work both during the summers and during the academic year can usually complete the required course work for an STL in two academic years. Students may, however, take up to six calendar years to complete the degree, from the date of enrollment in their first course.

2. (A). Thesis Proposal

The student must be thoroughly acquainted with the basic requirements of the STL thesis and be familiar with the current list of authorized directors (posted on the SHMS website).

1. The student should undertake discussions regarding possible thesis topics as early as practicable in graduate studies, but normally not later than the half-way point of one's course work. These discussions are informal and may take place with a number of potential directors, professors, and advisors simultaneously.
2. Eventually the student and the potential director must meet to formulate a statement of thesis topic ("thesis statement") for submission to the STL Committee. The thesis statement must be accompanied by a basic bibliography and a general outline of the proposed thesis.
3. The director must present these materials to the STL Committee in a timely fashion and communicate its decisions to the student.
4. The STL Committee can:
 - a) reject the thesis proposal, in which case the student must abandon the topic or at least completely reformulate the proposal;
 - b) approve the proposal with significant reservations, in which case the proposal and subsequent modifications must be resubmitted to the STL Committee for approval; or
 - (3) approve the proposal outright, or with only minor reservations, in which latter case the STL chair will verify the sufficiency of such modifications and will communicate final approval, or not, to the director.

5. The director (personally or by proxy) will submit the approved thesis statement only (not the bibliography and outline) to the Theology Faculty for confirmation.
6. The director will communicate the decision of the Theology Faculty to the student. If the Theology Faculty does not confirm the thesis topic statement, the director will arrange to meet with the STL chair or the STL Committee for guidance.
7. Upon confirmation of the thesis topic, a reader shall be appointed. While a student may suggest a reader to the director, only the director may approach a potential reader and, if he or she is willing to serve, nominate the reader to the dean. If the dean approves of the selection, he formally appoints the reader, or asks the director to propose another name.

2. (B). Thesis approval

1. After a thesis topic statement is confirmed by the Theology Faculty, the director and student interact as mutually convenient. Full or partial drafts of the thesis may be exchanged, or not, as the director indicates.
2. At some point, the student delivers what he or she designates as a “complete draft” of the thesis to the director. The director has six weeks to assess this draft and to seek the reader’s evaluation. . The reader has up to three weeks to convey a formal evaluation to the director.
 - a) If the director, after consultation with the reader, **approves** the “complete draft”, he or she will return the “complete draft” to the student for minor revisions (those aimed at bringing the thesis up to library-ready quality). The student is responsible for returning the revised draft in a timely manner. The director has one week to recognize these revisions or to return the revised draft to the student for further minor improvements. When the director certifies the thesis as being library-ready, he or she immediately notifies the dean and the STL chair in writing, and promptly delivers an unbound, hardcopy of the thesis to the dean.
 - b) If the director **rejects** the “complete draft”, he or she will return it to the student, who is responsible for reworking it and resubmitting it to the director. The director has four weeks to assess successive “complete drafts”, as above, consulting with the reader as may be useful.

3) The *Lectio coram*

1. Under no circumstances can the STL Committee approve the topics proposed for a *Lectio coram* until it has received written notice from the student's thesis director that the student has submitted an approved and library-ready copy of the thesis to the director, as noted above. It may, however, begin deliberation on those topics before the thesis is approved. The student will consult with a faculty member designated by the STL Committee when ready to prepare the *Lectio coram* proposal.
2. The student must propose 10 *Lectio coram* topics to the dean. These topics should include three topics in systematic theology, three topics in scripture, and three topics in pastoral theology. Moral questions can be included under either systematic theology or pastoral theology depending on the particular topic and one topic should be clearly a moral theology topic. Each topic must be accompanied by a bibliography, not to exceed one page per topic, which includes important sources and studies relevant to the topic. Only one proposed topic may come from the student's thesis.
3. When the student has prepared the proposal it should be submitted to the STL Committee who may approve it or ask for changes. The STL Committee has at least two but not more than four weeks to assess proposed topics.
4. When the proposal has been approved by the STL Committee the Committee will submit the proposal to the Dean for his review and approval.
5. The dean has one week to "certify" the 10 proposed topics and accompanying bibliographies and to forward them promptly to the STL Chair, or to return the proposed topics to the student for major or minor revisions (in which case, the student must resubmit the proposed topics as above).
6. Only when the proposals are in a form acceptable to the Dean will the *Lectio coram* be scheduled.
7. After the *Lectio coram* topics are approved, the STL Committee designates three of the ten topics as eligible subjects for the student's *Lectio*. The STL committee then fixes a time and date for the *Lectio*. The STL chair shall arrange for a board of three qualified persons to hear and assess the *Lectio*. A moderator should be appointed who may be one of the three voting Board Members or may simply function as non-voting moderator. Not less than 72 and not more than 84 hours before the *Lectio*, the STL chair shall convey the choice of the three designated topics to the student who chooses one to be the subject of his or her lecture.
8. The *Lectio* shall proceed as follows:
 - a) The student shall deliver the *Lectio coram* at a time and place designated by the STL Committee. At the opening of the *Lectio* the student shall announce the selected topic and confine his or her remarks to that topic. The student shall lecture for 45 minutes. The use of handouts and/or audio-visual material is at the student's discretion. Each member of the board shall then question the student for not less than

10 or more than 15 minutes on the topic. The moderator shall see to it that the *Lectio* runs at least one and one-half hours, but not longer than two hours.

- b) The *Lectio* moderator shall firmly indicate when 5 minutes are left of the student's original 45 minutes, when 2 minutes are left, and when time has expired, at which point the student shall cease speaking. Likewise it shall be indicated when respective questioners have 2 minutes left of their allotted time, and when their time has expired.
- c) Adjournment. During the brief adjournment, the audience will be given the opportunity to ask the student questions on the topic of his or her *Lectio*.
- d) The *Lectio* board during the adjournment convenes privately and determines whether the *Lectio* has been acceptable or not. They will also determine a grade: Pass with High Distinction; Pass with Distinction; Pass; Fail. Only whether the student has passed or failed will be announced after the adjournment. The grade will be entered on the grading sheet that each of the *Lectio* board will sign. A student who has failed can petition to attempt another *Lectio* at a future date.

Minor revisions made April 15, 2013