

Pastoral Synthesis Project (PSP) Policy

Description:

The Pastoral Synthesis Project takes the place of comprehensive examination and is required of all Pastoral Theology students.

The project is designed to elicit familiarity with scholarly sources and pastoral analysis of issues that impact the contemporary practice of ministry. The project is not solely a research paper nor a reflection paper, but a synthesis of both.

The project is typically done in the last semester of the Pastoral Theology program.

The written components of the Pastoral Synthesis Project comprise one 30-36 page paper that addresses three discrete areas (each roughly 10-11 pages in length; typed, double spaced, 12 point font; end notes are in addition to the 30-36 pages). The paper is done in the following order:

- **COMPONENT 1: PASTORAL PROGRAM**
- **COMPONENT 2: PASTORAL THEOLOGY**
- **COMPONENT 3: PASTORAL MINISTRY**

1. PASTORAL PROGRAM COMPONENT (10-12 pages in length): Attention to this component demonstrates a **practical sense of how to design and implement pastoral service in concrete terms**. The focus of the program is in one area of interest to the student. Examples include the following: education of a particular population, liturgy, cultural diversity awareness, social ministry, spirituality, spiritual direction, ministry to a particular population or age group (youth ministry, ministry to the homebound, etc). This list is not intended to be exhaustive. The student must determine the type of pastoral service to be addressed in Part I.

This part of the synthesis project elaborates a pastoral program proposal that addresses the following three areas:

- **WHO:** The paper identifies the people for whom the proposed program is intended, and the pastoral “need” that these people have
- **WHAT:** A concise description of the proposed program, the content and features of the program
- **HOW:** The process and structure for the program (How will it happen, where, how often, using what resources, etc.)

**2. PASTORAL THEOLOGY COMPONENT (10 pages approximately) :
Theological tradition and contemporary theological expression**

This part analyzes the relationship between a proposed pastoral program and the theology that supports it. Drawing upon sources of biblical and theological scholarship, this essay reflects systematically on the proposed pastoral program, and provides the theological supports for this program.

For example, if the pastoral program component addressed the celebration of confirmation among youth, the paper ought to address the history and theology of the sacrament, and/or a theology of the Holy Spirit, and/or developmental theories of faith development, or some other aspect(s) of the pastoral theological education that helps to support the pastoral program. If the pastoral program component addressed the need for parish-based spiritual direction groups among women from a variety of cultures in Los Angeles, then the theology component ought to address the underlying assumptions about a theology of the spirit and spirituality, and/or a theology of culture, and/or a feminist theology that will support the pastoral program. Finally, the essay offers conclusions and a summary of the writer's own convictions about the theological supports for the program.

3. PASTORAL MINISTRY COMPONENT: Theology of Ministry (10 pages)

This component articulates the writer's theology of pastoral ministry, drawing upon both scholarly sources and your own life convictions. This part should include the following:

- Articulate your own understanding of pastoral ministry today
- Reflect on the sources for that understanding, identifying at least one author or movement within theology that has enriched your understanding of pastoral ministry
- Consider how your current understanding of pastoral ministry impacts practically on your understanding of yourself as a pastoral theologian today?

APPLICATION FORM to complete the Pastoral Synthesis must be signed by the student and the Graduate Director *at least* one month prior to the due date for the completed Pastoral Synthesis Project. Students must have completed at least 30 units of the 36 units of course work prior to making application. [Students who are studying full time may receive an exception to this policy by permission of the Graduate Director.]

DUE DATE: The Pastoral Synthesis Project is due one month prior to the final day of classes in the final semester of a student's MA program. The PSP may not be done and approved prior to the completion of course work for the MA in Pastoral Theology.

GRADING: Since the Pastoral Synthesis Project carries zero credit hours, assessment will be *pass* or *fail*, and will be evaluated on the basis of the use of sources, clarity of position, and development and integration of the various components. Students who fail the Synthesis Project are eligible to receive a second opportunity (only a second opportunity) to pass the Project. For a second opportunity to pass, students must submit a revised Project within one year of the original Project due date.

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Getting Started on a Pastoral Synthesis Project

1. Talk with your academic advisor and begin to define a topic.
2. Begin by writing. Write a one paragraph description of what you *think* you may want to do – this can always be revised and focused later, once you are working with a PSP Director.
3. Fill out the form for ***Preliminary Proposal for Pastoral Synthesis Project*** that can be found on the web site and attached to this material. [Also available outside Program Administrator Jennifer Scott's office.] Include a TITLE and a one paragraph description of the PSP.
4. The Director and the Reader are appointed by the Department Administration and not by the student. You may, however, identify the names of THST faculty members with whom you would like to work on the PSP. These are *requests*, and we will try to honor them but we cannot guarantee them. Send the completed form including those names of the requested faculty PSP Director and Reader to the Graduate Director. Be sure to include your relevant contact information, especially your e mail and phone.
5. Register for THST 676, Pastoral Synthesis Project. This is necessary in order to keep record of your project with the University. [NOTE: THST 676 is 0 units and therefore no tuition is charged.]
6. When you have received an e mail confirmation of your PSP Director and Reader from the Graduate Director, you should contact the named PSP Director to continue work on refining the PSP title and description. Your PSP Director will receive the original PSP Proposal and will decide when the Title and Description are sufficiently revised and ready. The PSP Director will sign the PSP Proposal form and give a copy of the signed PSP Proposal to the Graduate Director.

Writing Process for PSP

7. The process can begin as soon as you and your PSP Director meet. Each component of the three components (see above) will function as a separate section. Endnotes should be used, according the Chicago Manual of Style. The paper is typed, double spaced, 12 point font. Length of the text of the three-part PSP must be a minimum of 30 pages, and may not exceed 36 pages total (Endnotes and title page are not counted in the length).
8. Your PSP Director will determine when the material (in part or in whole) is ready for the faculty Reader to review. Some Directors like to get the Reader involved at various points; others would rather wait until your work is polished. This is the Director's decision. The PSP Director and the Reader confer and determine the revisions that may be needed. Once the PSP Director and Reader have agreed, your PSP Director will inform you that the project is ready for final printing.
9. You must print 3 copies: One for PSP Director, one for your PSP Reader, one for THST Department to be given to the Graduate Director and kept on file in the Department of Theological Studies.
10. The PSP Director assigns a grade for your PSP, fills in and signs the Notice of Successful Completion of PSP (see below), and forwards an e mail to the Graduate Director in the last week of classes for that grade to be posted by the Graduate Director and the Registrar in that semester.

Department Policy on Completion Prior to Commencement:

It is the policy of the faculty of the Department of Theological Studies that ONLY students who have successfully completed all course work and 75% of the Pastoral Synthesis Project may "walk" at graduate commencement. [NOTE: the PSP Director in concert with the Graduate Director determines the percent of completion.]