

Master of Theology  
Master Religious Studies, Specialisation Theology

# Master's thesis

*Guide 2021-2022*

FTR-RTMA 100

**Radboud University**



*In the first semester, Master's students received information from the study advisor about the procedure and the assessment of the Master's thesis. This study manual is in line with this, with the aim of providing and concretizing the necessary information again in the context of the 'Workshop Master's thesis'.*

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# **1 RESEARCH DESIGN AND MASTER'S THESIS WORKSHOP**

## **1.1 Contents, place and function**

The Master's thesis concludes the Master's programme. The preparation and supervision take place in the Master's thesis workshop, (FTR\_THMA250) which students are obliged to attend. In the first three sessions, students develop a research question for their thesis under the guidance of a lecturer and with feedback from fellow students. For this purpose, they decide on a research method and subject that correspond with their Master's specialisation and they develop this into a preliminary draft. The next step is finding a supervisor with expertise in the chosen subject or the chosen research method. Students complete these steps individually and discuss the outcome in the workshop. The Master's thesis is completed at the end of the second semester.

## **1.2 Aim**

By completing the Master's thesis, students demonstrate their academic ability, i.e. their ability to think, write and do research independently, critically, methodically and systematically. In concrete terms, students have to show their insight into a theme and in one or more methods of approaching that theme by means of a well-defined, clear research problem and logically structured arguments.

## **1.3 Link between internship and thesis**

Within the specialization theology of the Master's in Religious Studies, a research internship of 10 EC is offered as an option. This internship is more or less standard connected to the writing of the master's thesis as a graduation project of the programme. Students who do not want a link between internship and thesis can request this with a reasoned letter to the programme coordinator.

In the specialisation '**MARW theology**', the link between internship and thesis presupposes that the research carried out during the internship can be developed into a thesis subject. It is important that students contact the programme coordinator, dr. P. Vermeer, to discuss the rules concerning the internship. The students must carry out literary-historical, systematic or empirical research, possibly on behalf of third parties. It goes without saying that at this stage of the programme high demands are placed on the nature, methodical approach and results of the work carried out by the student and that there must be a clear relationship with the content and level of the programme. In an internship contract, the concrete agreements (question and objective, research design and planning) must be determined.

## **1.4 Period, scheduling and study load**

Workgroup sessions start in the second semester. Students have to sign up for this on OSIRIS. The workshop is supervised by Dr. G. Ackermans.

The timetable and material covered in the sessions is as follows: three introductory sessions (on questions such as: how do I formulate a good research question, how do I find a supervisor, etc.) and a session at the start of period IV to monitor progress.

*Session 1:*

Brief introduction on requirements and criteria, and questions such as: how do I formulate a good research question, how do I find a supervisor, etc.

*Session 2:*

Discussion of research proposals.

*Session 3:*

Discussion of research proposals and how to find a supervisor.

*Session 4:*

Discussion of progress with the thesis.

<i>Study load in hours (SLH)</i>	<i>Contact hours (CH)</i>	<i>Independent study hours</i>
15 EC = 420 SLH	4 CH = 8 SLH (4 x 2-hour sessions)	420 - 8 = 412 SLH

## 2 MASTER'S THESIS

The requirements and criteria of the Master's thesis appear in the faculty's Rules and Guidelines.

### 2.1 Master's Theology and Master's Religious Studies, specialisation Theology thesis requirements

The thesis:

- Pdf format, A4, round margins of at least 3.5 cm.
- Common 12 point typeface with serifs such as Times, Palatino or Garamond.
- Comprises 30 to 60 A4 typewritten pages, excluding footnotes and bibliography (15,000 to 20,000 words), unless the structure/content justifies a different length.
- Is written in good, clear, grammatically correct Dutch or English and understandable for qualified religious scholars in general. (this applies *mutatis mutandis* to theses written in any other language).
- Consistent references and a separate bibliography, both prepared according to a common system.
- Quotes source texts or recognized translations.
- Contains a summary of at most 120 words.
- Is provided with a title page with:
  - Title
  - Student name
  - Student number
  - Name of the supervisor(s)
  - Date
  - The text: 'Thesis to obtain the degree "Master of arts" in theology Radboud University Nijmegen'. For the master's specialisation in theology, the text: 'Thesis to obtain the degree "Master of Arts" in theology and religious studies Radboud University Nijmegen'.
- The reverse title page features the following text:  
'I hereby declare and assure, [name of student], that this thesis has been drawn up independently by me, that no sources and tools other than those mentioned by me have been used and that the passages in the work whose verbatim content or meaning from other works – including electronic media – has been taken by citing the source are made known as borrowing.'
- Has a structure as is customary for a scientific treatise (for example: title, introduction, problem, purpose and questioning, elaboration, conclusion, summary).
- Has a clear division into parts (such as chapters, paragraphs, paragraphs, paragraphs, appendices, intermezzi, register).
- If two or more students write a thesis together, in addition to common chapters, separate contributions from each student involved must be included.

### 2.2 Assessment criteria and weighting

The thesis grade is determined on the basis of the following criteria:

- Problem, goal and question (10%)  
Is there a clear problem and objective that fits well with a certain field of research or work (scientific and/or societal relevance)?
- Theoretical embedding (25%)  
Is the research problem placed in a theoretically relevant perspective? Is the theoretical

framework described in such a way that it is in-depth and critically focused on the research problem?

- Method (25%)  
Is the problem being studied with a scientific method? Is the choice of method sufficiently justified? Is the application of the method clearly described and executed correctly?
- Analysis and conclusions (20%)  
Is the problem critically analyzed using theories, models and methods? Based on the research results, are correct, comprehensive and unambiguous conclusions formulated as an answer to the research question?
- Reflection (10%)  
Is there a critical reflection on the design, choice of method and the results of the research? Is there a critical reflection on one's own role as a researcher?
- Structure and presentation (5%)  
Will the research be presented in a clear, consistent, structured and in accordance with the agreed size? Are the own findings presented correctly and scientifically justified (language use, reference of sources)?
- Originality (5%)  
Does the thesis testifies to originality and creativity? Is there multidisciplinary?

The final mark is determined for 90% by the thesis grade and for 10% by the defense.

### 2.3 Assessment procedure

The following drafting plan describes the procedure for the registration, assessment and defense of the master's thesis. The web forms for registering and submitting the thesis can be found on the faculty intranet.

1. No later than one month before the intended submission date, the thesis supervisor requests the Board of Examiners to set up a committee of examiners (CoA). [webform]
2. The Board of Examiners appoints the CoA: 1st examiner (thesis supervisor and also chairman), 2nd examiner and permanent examiner. The 1st examiner informs the student about the CoA.
3. The thesis supervisor performs a plagiarism check. If the suspicion of plagiarism arises, this will be reported to the Board of Examiners and the procedure will be suspended.
4. If, in the opinion of the thesis supervisor, the thesis supervisor is ready, the thesis supervisor submits the thesis. [webform]
5. The examiners fill in the assessment form independently of each other and submit their assessments to the permanent examiner.
6. If one or more examiners consider the thesis insufficient, the thesis supervisor asks the student to revise the thesis and to remove the objections of the examiners concerned. The procedure shall be resumed from point 3.
7. If the thesis is sufficient according to all examiners, then the 1st examiner informs the student about this. The student determines in consultation with the examiners the date, time and place of the defense.
8. After the thesis grade has been established, the defense takes place in front of the 1st and at least one other examiner (usually this is the 2nd examiner).
9. The examiners present at the defence assess the defence and complete the final assessment form.
10. The 1st examiner sends the final assessment form to the student. The permanent examiner submits all forms and the thesis to STIP.

## Appendix A: Master's thesis assessment form

Subject to change. The legally valid version can be found on the PTRS intranet

Final assessment of Master's thesis		
Student:	Student number:	
Title of thesis:		
First examiner:		
Second examiner:	Date:	
CRITERION	MARK	COMMENTS
Student has formulated a clear research problem and aim that corresponds with a given field of research or work (academic and social relevance). (10%)	0	
Student has put the research problem in a theoretically relevant perspective and has described the theoretical framework in such a way that it focuses on the research problem in a critical and in-depth manner. (25%)	0	
Student has studied the problem using an academic method. The choice of this method is adequately justified and the application of the method and techniques is clearly described and correctly conducted. (25%)	0	..
Student has critically analysed the problem using theories, models and methods and, based on the research results, has formulated correct, comprehensive and unambiguous conclusions that answer the initially formulated research question. (20%)	0	
Student has reflected critically on the structure, choice of method, results and his/her performance as a researcher. (10%)	0	
Student presents the research in a clear, logical and structured manner in accordance with the agreed length. The student articulates the results correctly and in an academic manner (language, source references). (5%)	0	
Originality, creativity, language and – if applicable – interdisciplinary approach of the thesis. (5%)	0	..
<b>Assessment Master's thesis (1st/2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> examiner)</b> (90% of final assessment)	0	
<b>DEFENCE</b>		
Student can express him/herself well; presents and responds in a way that is to the point, clear, well-reasoned and critical (also self-critical). (10% of final assessment)	0	
<b>Total</b>	0	
<b>Final assessment exam (rounded)</b>	0	



## **Appendix B: Fraud policy**

Radboud University's fraud scheme has been added as an appendix to the Education and Examination Regulations (OER) of the Faculty of FTR (<https://www.ru.nl/courseguides/fftr/>). In accordance with Article 4 of the rules on fraud, fraud shall mean:

### *Article 4. Definition of fraud*

1. At RU, fraud is understood to mean any act or omission by a student which, in its nature, is intended to have as an effect that proper assessment of the knowledge, understanding and skills of that student, or another student, is made fully or partially impossible.
2. Fraud is in any case understood to mean:
  - a) fraud when taking written interim examinations, including i. having materials available which are not permitted under the House Rules Examinations Rooms RU Regulations (Regeling Huisregels Tentamenruimten RU)•, ii. copying or exchanging information; iii. passing oneself off as someone else, or being represented by someone else during interim examinations;
  - b) fraud when producing theses and other papers, including i. plagiarism in the sense of using or copying someone else's texts, data or ideas without complete and correct source references, plagiarism in the sense of copying the work of another student and presenting this as one's own work and other specifically academic forms of plagiarism; ii. fabricating (making up) and/or falsifying (distorting) research data; iii. submitting a thesis or another paper that was written by someone else; iv self-plagiarism in the sense of submitting one's own work that has already been assessed elsewhere as being a new work.
  - c) Other fraud in the context of interim examinations or examinations, including i. taking possession of assignments, answer keys and the like, prior to the time the interim examination or examination is to take place; ii. changing answers to assignments in an interim examination or examination after it has been handed in for assessment; iii. providing incorrect information when applying for an exemption, extension of validity period. and the like. of an interim examination or an examination.
3. An attempt to commit fraud will also be seen as fraud for the purpose of these regulations.

The Royal Dutch Academy of Science (KNAW) has published an excellent brochure explicitly aimed at students and young researchers to cultivate their awareness of academic norms: KNAW [ed. J. Heilbron et al.] (2005). *Wetenschappelijk onderzoek: dilemma's en verleidingen*. Second edition. Free download at <http://knaw.nl/nl/actueel/publicaties/wetenschappelijk-onderzoek-dilemmas-en-verleidingen>.

Master's theses are tested for plagiarism by default via Ouriginal on Brightspace.

**Appendix C: Learning outcomes for the Master of Theology**

1. *Acquisition of specific knowledge and insight*

- a) The graduate will have thorough knowledge of and insight into the hermeneutic, systematic, critical and constructive tasks of theology, and the academic methods (literary, historical, systematic and empirical) needed for this.
- b) The graduate will have a thorough understanding of and insight into the historical and contemporary situation of Christianity as regard to its source texts, its philosophical and doctrinal content, and the practices in which it is manifested.
- c) The graduate will have expert knowledge in the chosen field of specialization.
- d) The graduate will have a thorough knowledge of and insight into the many contexts in which the meaning of Christianity has been expressed in the past, and more specifically is expressed in the context of contemporary society.
- e) The graduate will have knowledge of and insight into the professional field of qualified theologians.

2. *Application of specific knowledge and insight*

- a) The graduate is able to apply the above-mentioned knowledge and insight (1a-e) in a differentiated and largely independent manner by adequately describing, analysing and synthesising a new problem situation in a research project.
- b) The graduate is able to apply the above-mentioned knowledge and insight (1a-e) in a differentiated and largely independent manner in one of the following professional contexts: theological research, policy making, spiritual care and education.

3. *Forming a judgement*

The graduate can form an independent judgement of societal, ecclesiastic and/or theological developments based on a reasoned and synthesised synopsis of the knowledge and insight specified in 1a-e by gathering and interpreting relevant information and evaluating it independently according to academically justified internal and external criteria.

4. *Professional skills*

- a) Communication: The graduate is able to report the results of their own research both verbally and in writing and to communicate these results to both theologically and non-theologically trained audiences.
- b) Collaboration: The graduate is able to work together with others towards a (final) product and to make an active contribution to this work. The graduate organises the work in consultation with others and takes responsibility for their part in the collaboration.
- c) Feedback: The graduate is able to evaluate and improve a product, partly based on feedback from others and is able to provide feedback to others that supports them in evaluating and improving their work.

5. *Learning skills*

The graduate possesses the necessary skills to independently reproduce, understand, interpret, analyze, evaluate and develop knowledge about Christianity and its contexts in one of the following professional settings: theological research, policy making, spiritual care and education.

**Appendix D: Learning outcomes for the Master of Religious Studies, specialisation Theology**

*1. Gaining specific knowledge and insight*

- a) The graduate will have a sound knowledge of and insight into research methods and techniques of a selected research area, with the emphasis on ‘comparativity’ and formation of judgement.
- b) The graduate will have a sound knowledge of and insight into the historical origins and the current circumstances of world religions, in particular Islam and Christianity, with a focus on the source texts, doctrinaire content and religious practices, as well as their accompanying societal and cultural expressions.
- c) The graduate will have a sound knowledge of and insight into the history of the relations and interactions in particular between Islam or Christianity and other world religions, with regard to a specific theme.
- d) The graduate will have a sound knowledge of and insight into the current situation of the relations and interactions between in particular Islam or Christianity and other world religions, with regard to a specific theme and against the backdrop of current processes such as globalisation and modernism.
- e) The graduate will have knowledge of and insight into the professional field of qualified theologians and religious scientist.

*2. Applying specific knowledge and insight*

- a) The graduate will be able to apply knowledge and insight into religious traditions and their interaction in a discriminating (and relatively independent) manner following research methods and techniques, by accurately describing, analysing and synthesising a new problem situation in a research environment.
- b) The graduate will be able to apply knowledge and insight into religious traditions, their interactions and research methods and techniques in a discriminating (and relatively independent) manner, within one of the following professional contexts: research, policy and pastoral/spiritual care.

*3. Forming judgement*

The graduate will be able to make an independent scientific assessment of (a number of specific) views, religious practices and the social consequences of religious traditions, by collecting and interpreting relevant information and by evaluating this against a backdrop of scientifically sound internal and external criteria.

*4. Professional skills*

- a) Communication: The graduate is able to report the results of their own research both verbally and in writing and to communicate these results to both theologically and religious studies and non-theologically and religious studies trained audiences.
- b) Collaboration: The graduate is able to work together with others towards a (final) product and to make an active contribution to this work. The graduate organises the work in consultation with others and takes responsibility for their part in the collaboration.

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- c) Feedback: The graduate is able to evaluate and improve a product, partly based on feedback from others and is able to provide feedback to others that supports them in evaluating and improving their work.

### *5. Learning skills*

The graduate will possess the learning skills to independently generate, reproduce, understand, interpret, analyse and evaluate new information regarding religious traditions in one of the following professional contexts: research, policy and pastoral/spiritual care.