

THE MASTER OF SACRED THEOLOGY

Drew University Theological School



Purpose of the Handbook

This handbook is a guide for the **Master of Sacred Theology** degree of the Drew Theological School. It provides information and structure to facilitate moving through the program. A handbook is issued annually to ensure that students have up-to-date information. If there is any contradiction between this handbook and the [academic catalog of the Theological School](#) published on the Registrar's website, the catalog dated to the student's semester of entrance takes precedence.

Whether you want to apply for doctoral programs or deepen your understanding of a field of study or ministerial practice, the Drew Master of Sacred Theology (S.T.M.) degree provides an intensive year of training to achieve your goals. Recent masters of divinity students often use the S.T.M. as a fourth year of preparation for Christian ministry. The degree features seminars in scholarly skills and communication, a focused area of study, and an extended research paper.

This handbook provides:

- A Quick View of key Master of Sacred Theology student expectations
- Requirements and timelines for the program
- Review of academic policies and processes most relevant to S.T.M. students
- A program planning checklist

In Seminary Hall and in virtual Drew learning spaces, you are invited to linger in the Forest even as you are always engaging contexts beyond Drew. The Theological School is a diverse, ecumenical, and open community that dares to pursue the love, wisdom, and justice at the heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is our hope that this handbook will clarify your pathway to graduation and free your mind, body, and spirit for the deeply transformative work of theological education.

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Revised June 2026

Quick View of Student Expectations

✓ Pay attention to Drew's deadlines

The responsibility for your degree progress rests with you. All students are expected to work within Drew policies and procedures. Familiarize yourself with the academic calendar and the deadlines related to withdrawals, grade extensions, and academic petitions. Information can be found on the Registrar's office [page](#).

✓ Be conversant in academic writing styles

The S.T.M. is an advanced master's degree. You should be familiar with the forms and formats of writing academic essays and research papers. In order to work continuously on your writing, take advantage of the Theological School's reference librarian, and the resources of the Center for Academic Excellence and the Theological Language and Learning Center.

✓ Plan for your extended research paper early

The final project for the S.T.M. program is an extended research paper developed from a course usually taken within the first semester of the program. Due to the brevity of the program, it is important to start planning this paper early. Begin conversations with faculty as soon as possible so that you can produce your best work.

✓ Take Time for Professional Reflection

For many students, the S.T.M. program provides an opportunity to discern next steps on their academic and/or vocational path. Some S.T.M. students prepare to apply to doctoral programs, whether a Ph.D. or Doctor of Ministry. Some want to enhance their professional competency in a particular field. Others want a fourth year to prepare for Christian ministry. As you go through the S.T.M. program, take advantage of opportunities to discuss options and develop skills that will move you toward your goals.

Quick View of S.T.M. Program Requirements

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS	NUMBER OF CREDITS
Required Courses	3 credits
Choose THREE credits from:	
REL 530 – Studying Religion and Theology	1
REL 531 – Research Methods in a Digital Age	1
REL 532 – Critical Pedagogy and Religion	1
REL 533 – Public Writing and Media Communication	1
CRW 550 – Theological Research and Writing	2
Area of Study	9 credits
Three courses in an area of study from Theological School offerings as determined in consultation with academic advisor.	
Electives	9 credits
Three elective courses from Theological School offerings or from the Caspersen School programs by advisor approval.	
Extended Paper	3 credits
CRW 975– Thesis/Extended Paper Workshop	3
TOTAL CREDITS	24

Completing the Master of Sacred Theology Program

The Master of Sacred Theology (S.T.M.) degree provides advanced study for students who wish to prepare for doctoral studies or deepen training in a particular field or professional practice. It also serves individuals seeking a fourth year of preparation for Christian ministry beyond the M.Div. This program consists of online seminars, a focused area of study, and an extended research paper.

Coursework

The S.T.M. degree is usually completed in one year. In two semesters, full-time students select six courses (18 credits) based on their interests and goals. As the degree is brief, course selections should be strategic and focused. S.T.M. students choose from master's electives (600-level) or doctoral seminars (700-level). If preparatory work in a field is needed, students are allowed to take up to two courses at the 500-level beyond the 1 credit required online seminars.

At least three of the courses (9 credits total) should have a subject or thematic coherence. These three courses serve as an area of study in the degree. Common areas of study are:

- Bible and Cultures
- Theology and Philosophy
- Religion and Society
- Women's and Gender Studies
- Social Justice Advocacy
- Religion and Ecology
- Africana and African American Religions and Cultures
- Wesleyan/Methodist Studies
- Pastoral Care and Counseling
- Worship, Music, and the Arts
- Preaching

S.T.M. students also complete 3 credits in scholarly skills. Students register for one or more 1 credit online seminars each semester (REL 530, 531, 532, or 533) or for 2 credits in CRW 550 – Theological Research and Writing. All courses are available 100% online and at least one is offered in each semester. International students whose first language is not English are expected to take 3 credits in CRW 541 – Language and Learning in Theological Education. These students may petition the Graduate Academic Standing Committee to use this language course to waive the requirement for the 3 credits in scholarly skills. These students should consult with the instructor of CRW 541 and the S.T.M. Convener before submitting a petition. Study in ancient languages is not required for the degree but students working in Bible and Cultures may benefit from language study in the degree. As biblical languages do not count in the area of study, no more than 9 credits of electives can be used for biblical language study.

Extended Research Paper

Each S.T.M. student completes an extended research paper. The 35-40 page paper should demonstrate the student's ability to formulate productive questions, use appropriate research methods and resources for the selected area of study, and convey that research in an appropriately scholarly manner and style. Students often prepare the extended paper in the final semester using a paper written in a prior course as the groundwork. Students register for 3 credit CRW 975 – Extended Paper Workshop in the final semester to complete and receive credit for the extended paper.

The extended paper for the S.T.M. degree is a substantial research and writing project. Students should follow this process:

- Discuss the possibility of fulfilling this requirement with the professor of a course that is closely related to their area of study. Students may also work with another professor in their area of study, but it is best if the student has taken a course with that professor.
- Submit the **S.T.M. Extended Paper Proposal** form as soon as possible and at the latest at the beginning of the semester in which you will complete the paper. The form is available on the Theological School Resources for Current Students [webpage](#). In this proposal, students write a brief prospectus for the paper, compile an appropriate bibliography, and set a schedule for submitting drafts and the final version of the paper. It is important that the student get experience in receiving constructive feedback and incorporating it into revision(s) of the paper. It is this revision process that distinguishes the extended paper from a final paper written for other classes.
- Register for CRW 975 – Extended Paper Workshop in the semester in which you will complete the paper.
- Submit the paper to the professor according to the established schedule. You may also need to consult the Center for Academic Excellence, the Theological School reference librarian, and the ESOL tutors in the Theological Language and Learning Center in this process.
- The professor will grade the paper and submit a final grade for CRW 975. The **S.T.M. Extended Paper Grading Rubric** is provided on the Theological School Resources for Current Students [webpage](#).

Graduation

Students may complete the degree in August, January, or May of each year. Commencement exercises are held in May of each year for all students who have completed their degrees in the August or January prior to each Commencement.

Program Timeline

These sample schedules provide an overview of the possible timelines for completing the entire program:

For U.S. domestic students

Two semester completion	Three semester completion
First semester	First semester
3 courses (9 credits)	2 courses (6 credits)
1 or 2 credits in scholarly skills	1 or 2 credits in scholarly skills
Second semester	Second semester
3 courses (9 credits)	2 courses (6 credits)
1 or 2 credits in scholarly skills	1 or 2 credits in scholarly skills
3 credits in Extended Paper Workshop	
Graduation	
	Third semester
	2 courses (6 credits)
	3 credits in Extended Paper Workshop
	Graduation

These schedules complete the 24 credits required for graduation. Drew's financial awards apply for up to 24 total credits if students elect to take more credits.

Dropping below 6 credits in any semester is a problem for federal student loans and grants; however, there are no official minimum credit hours per semester for Drew scholarship aid. Masters students in Drew housing need to carry 9 credits per semester.

Students on a U.S. Visa must meet full-time status requirements (9 credits):

Two semesters	Three semesters
First semester	First semester
3 courses (9 credits)	3 courses (9 credits)
1 or 2 credits in scholarly skills	1 or 2 credits in scholarly skills
Second semester	Second semester
3 courses (9 credits)	3 courses (9 credits)
1 or 2 credits in scholarly skills	1 or 2 credits in scholarly skills
3 credits in Extended Paper Workshop	
Graduation	
	Third semester*
	3 credit in Extended Paper Workshop
	Graduation

* Students on U.S. visas are allowed to take a reduced number of credits in their final semester.

These schedules complete the 24 credits required for graduation. Drew's financial awards apply for up to 24 total credits if students elect to take more credits.

For all students, January and Summer term courses that fit into the course of study may be used to shorten the length of study or number of credits in a semester.

Frequently Asked Questions

The Theological School Academic Policies are published annually in Drew University's Theological School Catalog. This document can be accessed in its entirety from the Registrar's [webpage](#). If there is any contradiction between this Catalog and this handbook, the Catalog dated to the student's semester of entrance takes precedence.

How long do I have to complete the program?

Full-time students complete the degree in two or three semesters. Students are expected to complete the degree in no more than four semesters. Exceptions require the approval of the Graduate Academic Standing Committee. All academic requirements for the degree must be completed within four years from the date of initial matriculation.

Who is my advisor?

The Convener is the academic advisor for all S.T.M. students. Your meetings with your advisor typically center on course selection, vocational goals, and extended paper planning. The Convener's approval is needed for S.T.M. forms as well as for registration. Each semester the convener will provide you with a PIN that you will use to register for courses online. The Convener is not the advisor for your extender paper unless your paper is in their field and they have agreed to work with you through the regular Extended Paper planning process.

Although you cannot officially change your advisor, you are encouraged to make additional informal mentoring connections with faculty across the areas of your academic and vocational interests.

Can I use the S.T.M. courses to fulfill ordination requirements?

As most S.T.M. students have a Master of Divinity degree, it is common for students to use the S.T.M. to complete ordination requirements that they did not complete in their first degree, such as the series of courses required for United Methodist ordination. Students may use the S.T.M. to take ordination requirements as long as they stay within the parameters of the degree. For example, only two 500-level courses are allowed in the degree. United Methodist courses can be taken within the 9 credits of electives or as an area of study.

How best can I use the S.T.M. to prepare for submitting PhD applications?

While the traditional schedule is always available, students wishing to use the S.T.M. to apply to PhD programs may want to consider taking three semesters to complete the program or beginning the program in the spring semester. These alternative schedules allow a student to complete at least one semester of coursework before preparing applications for the standard December application cycle. Students who enter in Fall and take 3 semesters can then apply in their third semester. Students who enter in the spring semester complete coursework and the

extended paper before applying for programs in December. Students need time for the following work: identifying schools they would like to apply to, developing their personal statement, taking the GRE, and taking courses with professors from whom they might request recommendations. The extended paper can often serve as a writing sample for applications. Students should consult the S.T.M. Convener about plans and about workshops and support available for S.T.M. students seeking to make December advanced degree applications.

What if I am unable to complete the Extended Paper in the semester in which I enrolled in CRW 975?

If you are unable to complete the extended paper in the semester in which you have enrolled in CRW 975, you should apply for an Incomplete using the Graduate Academic Standing petition. As Incompletes extend the completion of the degree into the summer or subsequent semester, students who have an Incomplete in the extended paper or any course in the S.T.M. will not be allowed to participate in commencement until they have completed the entire degree.

Am I expected to use inclusive language in my work for this program?

The Drew University Theological School affirms the full equality of all persons in God's all-inclusive love, regardless of gender, race, nation, class, age, ability, religion, or sexual orientation (Galatians 3:28). This theological conviction finds social expression in spoken and written language. In order to live out a crucial practical dimension of our equality in Christ and to avoid marginalizing members of our community, the Theological School expects students to use non-discriminatory and mindfully inclusive language for humanity both in the classroom (that is, in writing assignments, presentations, and classroom discussions) and in the chapel liturgy (that is, in prayers and sermons). Students are also encouraged to use a variety of metaphors when referring to God. While students will not receive grade deductions on specific assignments, they will be evaluated on their overall efforts to engage the theological and social problems of discriminatory and exclusive language. This policy thus encourages students to work to integrate a theology of God's love and justice with everyday practice.

How do I get accommodations for a disability?

Students who require accommodations should contact the Office of Accessibility Resources (OAR), in Brothers College, 973-408-3962, for a private, confidential appointment. Accommodation Request Letters are issued to students after documentation, written by a qualified professional, is reviewed and accommodations are approved by OAR. See: <https://drew.edu/academic/student-resources/center-for-academic-excellence/office-of-accessibility-resources/>

Accommodations are implemented by faculty only after the student presents the Accommodation Request Letter issued by OAR. Letters should be presented to the faculty at least one week before the accommodation is needed. Students' requests for accommodations thus should be submitted to OAR within the first two weeks of a course. Returning students with previously approved accommodations should make letter requests for the current semester to Accessibility Resources within the first two weeks of class.

Registration Status

Students in the Master of Sacred Theology program are expected to maintain communication and connection with Drew throughout the entire program. Different registration statuses indicate your progress through the program.

Active

Students who are consistently registered for classes or continuous registration will maintain “active” status with Drew. This status allows students access to all academic, support, and student life services at the University. Students who fail to register in any semester will have their status revised to “inactive.” Students not registered for two semesters will be automatically withdrawn from the program and will have to petition for re-entry through the Registrar’s [webpage](#).

Leave of Absence

Unexpected life events or personal challenges can interrupt a student’s ability to make progress in the degree. At times like this, students might reduce the number of credits they plan to take or consider a complete leave of absence. This status stops the clock on your allowed time to completion of your degree. In addition to the 4 years allowed to complete the degree, students are allowed two semesters of official leave from the program. As a leave of absence is intended to provide time away from the work of the degree, students do not have access to academic, support, and student life services at the University.

Students may apply for a leave of absence at any time during matriculation in the program. To obtain a leave of absence from the program--whether for medical, financial, or personal reasons--students must file a leave of absence application online. This form is found on Treehouse. Any leave of absence that is approved becomes effective as of the date it is processed and is not applied retroactively. Students who take the leave during a semester should be aware of the grading and refund policies of the university. The date a leave is requested determines the amount of tuition refund (if any). For example, a leave of absence requested and received in the middle or at the end of a semester will not be effective from the beginning of the semester. If you are considering a leave of absence, please review the leave policies and deadlines found on the [Registrar](#) and [Business Office](#) webpages.

RE-ENTRY FOLLOWING LEAVE OF ABSENCE: When a student plans to return to the program following a leave of absence, they must submit a Re-Entry form, which can be found on the Registrar’s [webpage](#). If a student does not return from a leave of absence in the semester following the leave, the student’s status will be revised to “inactive.” If the student is inactive for two semesters, they will be withdrawn from the program by the University.

Medical Withdrawal from a Semester

Students with personal emergencies that occur after the drop/add dates have passed may apply for a medical withdrawal from an entire semester. The student must provide documentation of the medical situation. Upon approval by the Associate Dean for the Theological School, the student will be put on leave of absence and receive Ws for all courses in the semester. Regular tuition refund policies apply to medical withdrawals as to leaves of absence.

Voluntary Withdrawal from the Program

If for any reason a student finds it necessary to withdraw from the program, it is important that this decision be discussed with the program convener beforehand and that an appropriate and timely written notice is given to the office of the academic dean. In order to withdraw from the program, a student completes a Withdrawal form on Treehouse. Any notice of withdrawal from the program becomes official as of the date it is received. A student who has withdrawn from the program has no access to academic, support, and student life services at the University. A student wishing to re-enter a program after withdrawing must re-apply to the program through the Graduate Admissions office.

All withdrawals are subject to the Drew University refund and grading policies and deadlines. Be sure to pay attention to these deadlines. Students are encouraged to review these policies with the program convener, the Registrar, and the Business Office before submitting an application for withdrawal.

Academic Standing

In addition to regular course grading and assessments, students are evaluated each semester according to the standards of academic achievement and progress. The Graduate Academic Standing Committee reviews each student's academic performance after each semester and may revise student standing based on this review.

Good Standing

S.T.M. degree students must maintain a minimum 3.00 G.P.A.

Warning or Probation

Students who do not achieve a 3.0 GPA in any semester will be placed on warning or probation based on the criteria outlined in the Theological School Academic Catalog posted on the Registrar's [webpage](#). Students placed on academic probation are returned to good standing if they achieve an overall 3.0 GPA average or better at the next time of review.

Required Withdrawal

A student may be withdrawn from the program by the University for any of the following:

- Receiving all "F" grades in any one semester
- Being on probation and not returning to Good Standing at the end of the probationary semester
- Having two or more non-consecutive semesters on Warning or Probation
- A violation of the University's Academic Integrity or Human Rights policies.

Under exceptional circumstances only, a student on Required Withdrawal may appeal to the Academic Standing Committee to be re-admitted in the next term. If the appeal is approved, the student will be reinstated and placed on Probation. Such re-admissions are granted only in unusual cases, and in no cases may a student be re-admitted twice.

Standards of Academic Integrity

Drew University Standards

Drew University has established standards of academic integrity and procedures. These basic standards apply to all work done at Drew. Students are expected to study and comply with these principles. You can find the Academic Integrity policy for the Theological School in the academic catalog on the Registrar's [webpage](#).

The standards of academic integrity apply to information that is presented orally, in writing, or via the computer, in any format ranging from the most informal comment to a formal research paper or the writing of the final paper in reference to the project. These standards apply to source material gathered from other people, from written texts, from computer programs, from the Internet, or from any other location.

The following are examples of academic dishonesty, as defined in this policy:

Duplicate Submission – Submitting one's work in identical or similar form to fulfill more than one requirement without prior approval of the relevant faculty members is a breach of academic integrity. This includes using a paper or a substantial portion for more than one course or submitting material previously used to meet another requirement.

False Citation – Listing an author, title, or page reference as the source for obtained material, when the material actually came from another source or from another location within that source, is a breach of academic integrity. See the *Turabian Manual of Style* (latest edition and/or online quick guide) for how to cite quotations within the body of another author.

Plagiarism – Plagiarism is the act of appropriating or imitating the language, ideas, or thoughts of another and presenting them as one's own or without proper acknowledgement. This includes submitting as one's own a thesis, a paper, or part of a paper written by another person, whether that material was stolen, purchased, or shared freely. It also includes submitting a paper containing insufficient citation or misuse of source material. When in doubt, err on the side of referencing material. See the Drew Theological School catalog for a fuller discussion.

Sanctions

Sanctions are imposed for demonstrated breaches of academic honesty or scholarly integrity. See the section of the catalog on procedures for dealing with allegations of academic dishonesty. If dishonesty is determined, the sanctions may range from requiring that an assignment be redone to automatic failure of a course to dismissal from the Theological School.