General Information

The Master of Sacred Theology Degree

The STM degree is a second-level graduate professional degree for those who wish to pursue a year of more advanced coursework focusing on a particular discipline. The degree is not normally considered probationary for the doctorate.

The primary learning outcomes of the STM include:
1. advanced competency in one area or discipline of theological study; and
2. a capacity to conduct original research in that area.
3. growth in one’s capacity for a robust embrace of and engagement with social and theological diversity and one’s capacity to relate across difference.

STM candidates withdrawing from the STM program to apply for the Th.D. must submit a new application and may not transfer STM credit if they were deemed ineligible for admission to the doctoral program at the time of their initial STM application. Only 900-level courses will be considered for transfer, by petition to the Advanced Studies Committee (ASC). Students can transfer up to 8 credits of coursework into their STM program, by approval of the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. School of Theology transfer credit policy can be found here: http://www.bu.edu/academics/sth/policies/transfer-credits/.

Admissions

Applicants must hold a first-level graduate degree in theology, religion, or other discipline appropriate for advanced theological study and have a minimum grade point average of 3.0. Requests for transfer from one concentration to another is tantamount to a new application and would require:

a) a detailed petition justifying the request;

b) a signed statement from the potential new advisor consenting to take the student as an advisee.

Admission to the program, when granted, is into the STM curriculum (8 courses) with a written comprehensive exam to culminate the student’s coursework. Students who would like to write a thesis instead of taking a written comprehensive exam must petition to do so within the first semester of their program, using the STM Thesis Petition Form (Appendix A). More information on this procedure can be found in this handbook under the heading “Comprehensive Examination and Thesis Requirements.”

Academic Review

The ASC shall undertake an academic review of a student when report of an unsatisfactory course grade lower than B- or other unsatisfactory outcome such as required withdrawal from a course reaches the committee, either through a professor or through the Registrar. No grade lower than B- may be counted toward the STM degree.

Any faculty member may request an academic review of a STM student’s standing by submitting to the ASC a memorandum detailing the grounds for such a request.
In carrying out the academic review of a STM student, the ASC shall

A. Solicit the perspectives of the advisors, course instructor, and other directly involved faculty on the grade. Questions to consider include the following:

a. How important is this course within the student’s plan of study?

b. Based on the student’s work in the course, is the student capable of successfully fulfilling the requirements of an STM degree?

c. Is the student capable of fulfilling the STM requirements within the allowed timeframe?

d. Should the student be continued in the STM program?

B. Inform the student of the review process and provide them with an opportunity to submit to the ASC any factors or circumstances which they believe should be considered by the committee. The student may solicit faculty to write in their support as well.

After discussion, the ASC shall decide whether to recommend formal academic probation to the Registrar, to terminate the student from the STM program, or to continue the student in the program. A memo shall be sent to the candidate, with copies to the professor and the advisors, informing all parties of the ASC’s response and decision.

Two unsatisfactory course grades result in termination of candidacy, except by approved petition to the ASC. In such cases, no academic review is necessary. The ASC, upon being informed of the relevant events, shall notify the student of termination from the program, unless the ASC, within 30 days of the notification or a week prior to its next scheduled meeting, whichever is later, receives and approves a petition from the student to continue in the program, the Registrar shall be informed of the ASC’s action and the student’s candidacy terminated.

Program Administration and Procedures

Coursework

The STM program requires eight semester courses or 32 credits. A minimum of five semester courses are required in the major discipline and three electives. Six of the eight required courses must be taken at Boston University. All courses must be taken at the 800 or 900 level. 700 level courses are not open for credit to STM students.

A maximum of three of the eight semester courses may be fulfilled through directed studies (including one for thesis writing, by approved Thesis Petition).

Students in the STM program may enroll in formal study of any biblical, classical, or ancient Near Eastern languages appropriate to their major for full-credit towards the degree, up to a maximum of 16 credits (the requirement of 800 level or higher courses does not apply in these cases).

Time Limitations and Requirements

STM students who are registered full-time must complete the degree within two semesters. Credits earned more than ten years before the date the degree is to be conferred may not be applied toward the degree. In all cases, STM students must earn the degree within two years (four semesters) of the semester of matriculation.

Comprehensive Examination and Thesis Requirements

All STM students are required either to pass a written, two-hour comprehensive exam or to write a thesis. At the discretion of the advisor, candidates for whom English is a second language may be allowed up to one additional hour. The presumed culmination for all admitted STM students is the
written comprehensive exam. Two faculty members must read the written comprehensive exam. Exam readers for the STM must minimally have a STM or equivalent. Exam results will be recorded and returned to the students thirty days after taking the exam.

Students who want to write a thesis must petition to do so using the STM Thesis Petition Form (Appendix A). Students must complete the petition form, which includes the signature of an advisor willing to support the thesis-writing process. Each student must submit the completed petition form, a brief proposal of the topic of the thesis (up to two pages in length), a one-page bibliography, and an academic writing sample (fewer than 20 pages) to the Advanced Studies Program Coordinator during the first semester of STM coursework. The deadline for submission of the petition form is December 5th for students who matriculate in the fall semester, and April 5th for students who matriculate in the spring semester. The Thesis Petition will then be forwarded to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs for review.

Students choosing the thesis option may count it as equivalent to one course (4 credits) in the major if they register for a directed study with the major advisor. The thesis is graded; a minimum of B- is required. The student must consult with the Advanced Studies Program Coordinator regarding guidelines governing the form in which the dissertation shall be submitted to the Library.

The School of Theology requires that all theses be formatted in accordance the Research Guide for Writers of Theses and Dissertations and Electronic Submission (http://www.bu.edu/library/files/2011/05/ElectronicGuide2013b.pdf). For areas not covered by that guide, use Kate L. Turabian’s *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, currently in its 7th edition (2007). In cases where Turabian needs to be supplemented, the current edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* shall be consulted. For information on graduation deadlines, format review, and thesis submission go to http://www.bu.edu/sth/academics/advanced-studies/graduation-deadlines-for-stm-thd-phd-and-admin/. 
STM Thesis Petition Form
Boston University School of Theology

Instructions: (1) Complete your portion of the petition and (2) attach a proposal of your thesis topic (two pages in length), (3) a one-page bibliography, and (4) an academic writing sample (fewer than 20 pages in length).

Once you have completed your portion of the petition form and attached these items, take the paperwork to a faculty member for advising approval. Please understand that not every petition will be accepted by the faculty. If you receive a signature from a faculty member agreeing to be your STM Thesis Advisor, you may submit the signed Petition form and your proposal to Ms. Robyn Kinch, Advanced Studies Program Coordinator, in the Office of Registration and Financial Aid. The deadline for submission of the petition form is December 5th for students who matriculate in the fall semester, and April 5th for students who matriculate in the spring semester. Final review and approval is made by the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.

Student’s Name ________________________ BU ID# ________________________

Date of STM Matriculation ________________

Current GPA (if applicable) ________________________

Student’s Signature ________________________ Date ________________________

Thesis Advisor’s Signature ________________________ Date ________________________

Associate Dean ________________________ Date ________________________
for Academic Affairs