

Procedure Bachelor's Thesis in Theology

The Bachelor's Thesis in Theology

The Bachelor's Thesis in Theology (9 ECTS credits) consists of a personal representation of and a reflection on existing knowledge and insights by the student in the field of academic theology. The thesis consists of 7,000 to a maximum of 10,000 words¹. Requirements are set for the thesis with regard to content, skills, and attitude. These requirements are further specified in the assessment matrix annexed to this procedure.²

This Procedure Bachelor's Thesis in Theology consists of a part for students and a part for lecturers. The requirements for the Bachelor's Thesis are detailed in the "Points of attention in the assessment Bachelor's Thesis Theology." This document is annexed to this Procedure and the Annex forms an integral part of the Procedure.

Part 1: For students

1. Thesis plan and thesis seminar

The student may only start writing the Bachelor's thesis when he or she has successfully completed at least 120 credits of the Bachelor's curriculum. The student who follows the Bachelor's program of 147 credits must have successfully completed 108 credits of the curriculum.

There is a Bachelor's thesis coordinator in both locations, Utrecht and Tilburg. This coordinator advises the students and introduces them to writing the Bachelor's Thesis. The Bachelor's thesis coordinator coordinates the assignment of a teacher of Tilburg School of Catholic Theology as supervisor to a student, and, together with the supervisor, approves the thesis plan. The thesis plan also includes the name of the thesis assessor who is not involved in the supervision (hereinafter referred to as the assessor).

The Bachelor's thesis coordinator organizes a thesis seminar, starting in October, with at least three meetings in which he supervises the writing process of the Bachelor's thesis³ and in which students share their progress with each other. The students are obliged to participate in the meetings of the thesis seminar.

2. Writing the thesis

After the approval of the thesis plan, the student will start writing the thesis. The supervisor has 30 hours of supervision available per student, during a period of six months.

¹ The number of words is counted including notes, excluding the bibliography and appendices.

² For general, university-wide information about graduation, see:

<https://www.tilburguniversity.edu/students/studying/lectures/graduation/graduation-bachelor>

³ This only concerns the process; the content supervision is done by the supervisor.

During the writing of the thesis, the student regularly consults with the supervisor and joins the thesis seminar with fellow students who are also working on a Bachelor's thesis.

3. Assessment

The student must consult the supervisor in good time about the time frame between the submission of the final version of the thesis, the assessment, and the final interview. As soon as the supervisor believes that the thesis is of a sufficient level (see the assessment matrix for the assessment criteria), it will be submitted to the assessor, who will make an assessment within fifteen working days. The supervisor and the assessor fill out the assessment matrix independently. The preliminary average grade is the average of the two assessments. The thesis must have been assessed with an average provisional grade higher than 6.5 by the supervisor and assessor before the student is admitted to the final interview.

If the supervisor and assessor, in assessing the quality of the thesis, consider the thesis to be sufficient but with an average provisional grade of 6.5 or lower, they should contact the Examination Board. The Examination Board will then appoint a second assessor, who will assess whether the thesis is sufficient and fill in the assessment matrix for an assessor. If this assessment is positive, the final interview can be planned. If the assessment is negative, the thesis must be improved and submitted again to the second assessor appointed by the Examination Board. Only when the second assessor appointed by the Examination Board has assessed the thesis as sufficient, the final interview can be planned. The second assessor appointed by the Examination Board is not part of the examination committee.

If the assessor considers the thesis to be insufficient, the supervisor informs the student of the criticism, after which the student, in consultation with the supervisor, should improve the thesis. The thesis is then submitted again to the assessor, who re-assesses it.

If the supervisor and assessor cannot reach agreement on the quality of the Bachelor's thesis and the grade, the procedure described in Section 9 will be followed.

If the thesis is twice assessed as insufficient by the supervisor or assessor, the student may adapt the thesis without further supervision and resubmit it for assessment. If the thesis is again assessed as insufficient, the student has to write a completely new thesis.

The student receives a copy of the assessment matrixes and a copy of the assessment reports in which the supervisor and the assessor explain their assessment point by point. The quality of the thesis defense during the final interview can influence the final grade: the grade can be adjusted up or down by a maximum of half a point before rounding off..

If the student wants to obtain the Bachelor's degree before September 1, the student must submit the final version by July 1 at the latest and the thesis must be assessed with an average provisional grade higher than 6.5.

4. The thesis ombudsman

The Tilburg School of Catholic Theology has a student confidential advisor who mediates in problems between students and Bachelor's thesis supervisor or assessor.

5. Final interview

The student who, according to both the supervisor and the assessor, has written a thesis of sufficient result, may, in consultation with the supervisor and the assessor, choose a date on which the final interview will take place in which the student will defend the Thesis.

The thesis defense is, determined by the student, public or private and takes place in the presence of the supervisor and the assessor. At the defense, the student will hand in the signed form Statement authorship. The defense is included in determining the final grade for the thesis.

6. Archiving

1. By submitting their thesis plan and thesis, students consent, in the broadest sense, to having the thesis checked for plagiarism through a plagiarism detection system of the institution's choice.
2. This also implies the permission for the thesis to be included in the repository of Tilburg University and the databases of plagiarism detection systems with which TiU and/or another educational institution in the Netherlands has contracted or will contract in the future. This is for future plagiarism control on other works.
3. The student must submit two printed copies of the thesis. One copy is for the supervisor and one for the assessor. The student also submits a digital version (PDF file) of the thesis to the School's secretary's office. The student ensures that the file meets the requirements and does not include personal information (e.g. email or postal address, phone number).⁴ The secretary's office keeps the School's digital thesis archive up to date and ensures that a digital version of the Thesis is sent to the university's library, if the student has handed in the signed form Statement thesis.

Part 2: For lecturers

7. Duties Bachelor's thesis coordinator

A Bachelor's thesis coordinator has been appointed at both locations. His or her tasks are as follows:

1. lead the thesis seminar;
2. coordinate the assignment of a supervisor to a student. The following situations often occur:
 - a. *The coordinator encourages the student, after consultation on a suitable choice, to approach a supervisor him/herself.* In this case, the Bachelor's thesis coordinator verifies whether the lecturer in question has room for supervision and whether the lecturer is indeed available.
 - b. *The student requests the Bachelor's thesis coordinator to assign a supervisor.* In this situation, the Bachelor's thesis coordinator will look for a supervisor on the basis of expertise and availability, among other things, and assigns him/her to the student;

⁴ See: <https://www.tilburguniversity.edu/about/university-library/writing-and-information-skills/publishing-theses>. The layout of the thesis must also meet the requirements of the School's style guide.

3. supervises the writing of the thesis plan, has the thesis plan approved by the supervisor and assessor, and submits a signed copy of the thesis plan to the School's secretary office;
4. supports the supervisor in finding an assessor of the thesis.

8. Tasks supervisor

In consultation with the Bachelor's thesis coordinator, a member of the academic staff⁵ of the Tilburg School of Catholic Theology will supervise the student in writing the Bachelor's thesis. A supervisor of a Bachelor's thesis has at least a Master's degree. A supervisor must in all cases have been appointed as an examiner by the Examination Board.

The supervisor

1. selects an assessor at the start of the program, after consultation with the student and the thesis coordinator, and ensures that the assessor signs the thesis plan;
2. is responsible for the ethical review application in the case of empirical research;
3. regularly allows time for contact moments with the student during the thesis trajectory to assess the progress of and, if necessary, adjust the thesis trajectory and offers feedback to submitted texts according to a mutually agreed planning. Agreements on the method of supervision are recorded in the initial phase of the thesis trajectory;
4. is responsible for performing an automatic plagiarism check on the final version of the thesis;
5. fills out the assessment matrix for a supervisor independently of the assessor and writes independently of the assessor an assessment report in which the assessment is explained in point by point;
6. if the assessor considers the thesis to be insufficient, communicates the criticism to the student and supervises the student in improving the thesis;
7. contacts the Examination Board if the average preliminary grade is sufficient but 6.5 or lower (see paragraph 3);
8. sets a date for the final interview in consultation with the student and the assessor;
9. sends the reports, i.e. the filled-out matrix, the assessment report and the report of the automatic plagiarism check -to the School's secretary's office. These reports (the filled-out matrix and the assessment report) shall be archived and could be made available for inspection by a review committee.
10. The supervisor sends the student digital copies of the filled-out assessment matrixes and the assessment reports within two weeks after the final interview;
11. together with the assessor, conducts the final interview in which the student defends the thesis;
12. signs the examination pass slip for the thesis with the final grade.

The tasks of the supervisor take up 30 hours.

9. Tasks of the assessor not involved in the supervision

In order to guarantee the quality of the education, an assessor who is not involved in the supervision of the Bachelor's thesis acts as the assessor for the assessment of the Bachelor's Thesis. He/she is requested by the thesis supervisor and belongs to the scientific staff of the Tilburg School of Catholic Theology. An assessor of a Bachelor's thesis has at least a Master's degree. An assessor must in all cases have been appointed as an examiner by the Examination Board

The assessor

1. assesses the quality of the completed Bachelor's thesis at the end of the Bachelor's thesis trajectory;
2. fills out the assessment matrix for an assessor and writes an assessment report independently of the supervisor;
3. communicates the grade to supervisor and in case of a fail also communicates the criticism to the supervisor;
4. sends the filled-out assessment matrix and report to the School's secretary office;
5. together with the supervisor, conducts the final interview in which the student defends the thesis.

If the supervisor and assessor fail to reach agreement on the quality of the Bachelor's thesis and the grade, the Examining Board will be informed. The Examining Board will appoint, if necessary after consultation with the Vice-Dean for Education, a third person to assess the thesis to act as an intermediary between the supervisor and the assessor. If the mediation is not successful, this third person will independently determine the grade of the thesis, taking into account the views of both the supervisor and the assessor.

The tasks of the assessor and the additional assessor are remunerated with 8 hours per Thesis.

10. Hardship clause

The Examination Board is authorized to make an exception to the Procedure Bachelor's Thesis in Theology in individual cases in favor of the student in the event of major unfairness.

11. Entry into force

This Procedure replaces previous procedures regarding the Bachelor's thesis Theology and will enter into force on September 1, 2023.

Thus adopted by the Examination Board of the Tilburg School of Catholic Theology on June 29 2023.

Appendix to Procedure bachelor's Thesis Theology:

Assessment matrix Bachelor's Thesis Theology

Please indicate whether the thesis meets the following basic requirements	Y/N
Is the length of the thesis in accordance with the requirements? Are appendices and footnotes used appropriately? Are quotes, references and acknowledgements made correctly and are they complete? Is the bibliography adequate?	
A. Content	Digit *
1. Question (Clarity; Limitation, Embedding in a scientific, social and/or ecclesiastical context; Reasons; Originality)	
2. Theological insight/choice literature (Size and choice of literature studied; Critical processing of literature; Description of concepts and terms; Translation of theoretical insights into own research)	
3. Quality and accountability of research (Operationalisation of questions; Description and justification of the method used; Accountability of methodical choices; Application method; If applicable: compliance with the rules on ethics and data management)	
4. Conclusion and discussion (Answering the question; Summary of the most important research findings; Critical reflection on the research carried out)	
<i>Subtotal A (average of 1 to 4)</i>	
B. Skills	
5. Structure and Argumentation (Clear, reasoned structure; Clarity of division into chapters, paragraphs and paragraph execution; Argumentation and analysis; Creativity)	
6. Controllability (Mention of source and literature; Study of sources in original languages; Quoting, paraphrasing, justification; References to tables, appendices, figures, etc.)	
7. Language use (Precision; Clarity; Readability; Correct tone; Spelling and punctuation)	
8. External design (Maintaining layout and shape)	
<i>Subtotal B (average of 5 to 8)</i>	
C. HOUDING	
9. Process/attitude (Independence, tempo and time management; Dealing with criticism and feedback from supervisor; Awareness of responsibility; Curiosity, critical sense)	
<i>Subtotal C</i>	
Provisional final mark: $[(5 \times \text{sub-total A}) + (4 \times \text{sub-total B}) + \text{Sub-total C}] : 10 =$	
10. Oral presentation (Interesting presentation; Adequate defence)	
Final grade*: the preliminary final mark maximum 0.5 adjusted or down, after the defence].	

* The Thesis must be assessed as insufficient if one or more of the parts 1 to 8 are assessed lower than by a 5.5.

Explanation

The points for attention for the assessment are:

A. Content

1. Question
2. Theological insight/choice literature
3. Quality and accountability of research
4. Conclusion and discussion

B. Skills

5. Structure and Argumentation
6. Controllability
7. Language use
8. External design

C. Posture

9. Process/attitude

Code of conduct regarding the level of the figure:

The six is marked: a moderate bachelor Thesis. For an eight or higher, both (1) the chapters on theory and method, as well as (2) the description, analysis and interpretation of data (of any type) must have been properly executed. In addition, (3) the relationships between these two groups of components must also be discussed in a chapter on conclusions and discussion. This leads to the following global guideline:

- 6 = moderate in all respects;
- 6.5 = sufficient;
- 7 = more than sufficient;
- 7.5 = good bachelor's Thesis, but one of the three parts mentioned above (theory/method, results, conclusion) is only sufficiently worked out;
- 8 = good on all parts;
- 9 = very good on all parts;
- 10 = excellent on all parts.

The quality of the student's defense during the final interview can lead to an adjustment of the grade by half a point up or down.

Required documents final interview thesis or graduation

Documents required to schedule a final interview

- Assessment Matrix Supervisor, completed up to and including the preliminary final mark
- Assessment Matrix Assessor, completed up to and including the preliminary final mark
- Report automatic plagiarism check

These documents must be handed in at the secretariat of the TST. The secretariat will submit the documents to the secretary of the Examination Board. After the secretary of the Examination Board has approved them, the final interview or examination can be scheduled.

Required documents to be able to issue a diploma

- Assessment Matrix Supervisor, fully completed
- Assessment Matrix Assessor, fully completed
- Completed form Authorship Thesis

Only when these documents have been handed in, a diploma may be given to the student. The last parts of the excel file may also be completed with a pen on a printed version.

Within two weeks after graduation

- Fully completed Assessment reports (submitted by the supervisor and assessor)
- Completed form 'Statement Graduation thesis TST' (submitted by the student)
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If the student does not submit the second form, the thesis will not be made public through the university library.