



GRADUATE STUDIES HANDBOOK

AND

GRADUATE STUDENT ASSISTANT HANDBOOK

SCHOOL OF RELIGION

GUIDELINES FOR
GRADUATE STUDIES PROGRAMS AND
GRADUATE STUDENT ASSISTANT POSITIONS
IN THE SCHOOL OF RELIGION
LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

Welcome to the graduate program of the School of Religion. Your acceptance into it indicates that we believe that you have significant potential for intellectual leadership as a Christian. All of us on the faculty trust that your time with us will be beneficial in training you to your maximum capacity. Only our best is most pleasing to God, and only that which is excellent will be effective in convincing our world of the truth. We challenge you to work hard, to think clearly, and persistently to seek the truth; then you will better know the Truth.

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PROGRAMS

The School of Religion of Liberty University offers degree programs in preparation for teaching, research and service. This includes the Master of Arts degree in Religious Studies with various specializations in Biblical Studies (with a focus on either Old Testament or New Testament), Apologetics, Church History, Philosophy of Religion, and Theological Studies (the latter four are based in the Department of Philosophy and Theology).

The details on specific admission requirements, programs and graduation requirements, as well as general academic policies, are found in the University graduate catalog. Because the School of Religion's graduate courses are offered in the Seminary as well as the University, they are also listed in the Seminary catalog. It is your responsibility to obtain each catalog and to know the information in them.

COURSES OF STUDY

The M.A. degree requires 36 credit hours to graduate. It has both required and elective courses. You are responsible to obtain a status sheet and to keep it updated. Your specific program must be designed in consultation with and approved by your faculty advisor, who is either the Chair of the department of your specialization or another faculty member designated by the Chair. Under certain circumstances, such as a strong undergraduate background or the necessity of taking an alternate course to round out a specialization, the advisor, with concurrence of the Department Chair, may make a substitution for a required course. While most of your courses will be taken within your major department, students are encouraged to take some work in related fields in other departments of the University. Even when graduate courses are not offered in a department, independent studies and seminars can be arranged with individual faculty.

All students in the M.A. in Religious Studies program are required to take a three-hour course in research (normally THEO 680) as preparation for their thesis. This is best taken early in the program.

Three credit hours will be granted for the thesis. Credit is not awarded until the thesis grade is reported by the thesis mentor. You may not register for your thesis until the semester in which you intend to complete it.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE, CONTINUING STUDIES

You must be enrolled during each semester of study until you complete all degree requirements, including the thesis (while writing your thesis you must register for ____ 698, Continuing Studies). If you are not registering for course work during a semester, you will be charged the current tuition rate for one credit hour to cover the continued use of library facilities and faculty.

Under extenuating circumstances, and if you will be doing no academic work involving Liberty's facilities or faculty, you may apply for a leave of absence for a specified period. This must be approved by your advisor or mentor and by your Department Chair.

There is a five year time limit for degree completion. All leaves and continuing studies enrollments are included in the five year limit. You may apply to the Dean of Graduate Studies for an extension of the limit, but these are granted only when there is an appropriate justification.

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT

The M.A. requires proficiency in one foreign language for research. Proficiency can be demonstrated by the successful completion of 12 credit hours at the undergraduate level or 9 at the graduate level with an overall average of *B*, by a passing grade on a translation test, or by other documentation acceptable to the Director of Graduate Studies.

Students specializing in Biblical Studies are expected to be proficient in Greek or Hebrew before entering the program. Ordinarily this means students must have at least 9 semester hours of credit in Greek or Hebrew. However, students may be admitted on probation while they satisfy this requirement. In rare cases the language may be waived or another language may be substituted for the biblical language. This will be determined by the student's area of research and must be approved by the Biblical Studies department chair.

Graduate courses in a language that are used to meet the proficiency requirement may not be counted in the credit hour graduation requirement. In most cases, the specific language will be determined by the concentration and by the topic of the thesis. Students must consult with their advisor, and should be aware that changes made in program or thesis topic may necessitate a change in the required language.

Students whose native language is not English may use their native language to meet the requirement only if it is suitable to their thesis. Under no circumstances will English be allowed to meet the requirement.

The language proficiency requirement must be met before registering for the thesis and beginning concentrated research for the thesis. The recommended research language depends on the thesis topic. The following languages are normally recommended, due to their research value: German, French, Greek, Hebrew, or Latin.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS

All M.A. students will take comprehensive examinations as follows:

1. **Apologetics, Theology, Philosophy of Religion, Church History**

Students take a three hour written exam covering the basic material in the field. A study guide is available in the office of the School of Religion. The Chair of the department can ask for a retake of the written examination, or, for an oral examination, if the written examination is not successfully completed on the first (or most recent) attempt.

2. **Biblical Studies**

Students take three one-hour tests which do not have to be taken together. The first is a translation of a Biblical text agreed on in advance with your advisor. The second test is a translation of an unannounced Biblical text. The third is a set of essay questions on Old or New Testament backgrounds or interpretation, sometimes administered as a research project.

A study guide is available from the Chair of Biblical Studies or in the office of the School of Religion.

The comprehensive exam must be taken no less than one month prior to the month of anticipated graduation. The exam is given four times during the school year as follows: during the week in August before classes start, the week following Fall Break or Thanksgiving Break, the week in January before Spring semester starts, and the week following Spring Break. Please check with the secretary in the School of Religion for the exact date of the exam. Students may elect to take it in the morning, beginning at 8:30, or in the afternoon, beginning at 1:00. Students register for the comprehensive exam through the Registrar's Office. All comprehensive exams are graded on a pass/fail basis. If you fail, you may repeat the test, on approval by the department Chair. After a third failure your advisor must require additional course work.

PROGRAM TRACKING FORM

An official program tracking form is kept in the Registrar's Office on every student in order to ensure that you complete all of the requirements for the degree. Your advisor is responsible for signing for your language requirement and the comprehensive exam when completed. Your thesis mentor and advisor sign for the thesis proposal and the thesis itself. While keeping your program status current is not your responsibility, it is advisable for you to check on it from time to time. If something has been omitted, please notify the person responsible.

THESIS

I. INTRODUCTION

The production of an acceptable thesis represents the culmination of the Master of Arts degree program. More than just a term paper, a thesis is an extended discourse on a research topic of significance in the student's field of study. Consequently, you are encouraged to be thinking about a topic early in the program and to pursue the various stages of thesis production in an orderly, systematic way, frequently during and as part of your course work.

As you work on a thesis, you should remember that the ability to think constructively and to carry out a program of research must be demonstrated in the final product. The thesis should be at least 15,000 words, exclusive of front matter and bibliography. In order to make a worthy contribution to the fund of knowledge, you should choose a thesis subject which will add to and is based in the current discussion of scholars in your field. This means that you will need to search exhaustively for what others have written on your topic. But you should not seek merely to repeat what others have said about the topic; you must make an original contribution to the subject. In sum, the thesis must embody a well-researched position demonstrating critical judgment, independence of thought, and exegetical soundness.

Essential guidelines for thesis form are found in *A Manual For Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (current edition) by Kate L. Turabian. Additional instructions as to the form and mechanics of the thesis will be given in THEO 680. Accuracy in form, correct grammar, good organization, and a clear and concise English style

will be important to a successful thesis. Students are expected to know and follow the policy on academic honesty stated in the Graduate Catalog.

A thesis is primarily an academic document demonstrating a high level of proficiency in research and analytical skills. To accomplish this purpose, it may be necessary for the thesis writer to draw conclusions with which the faculty are not in full agreement. For this reason it is understood that the views expressed in students' theses are not necessarily those of the university, the faculty, or the specific mentor or reader(s) who may approve the thesis.

You should recognize, on the other hand, that you are writing the thesis at Liberty University and for a mentor and reader(s) who agree with the doctrinal statement of the institution.

II. STEPS IN THE PRODUCTION OF THE THESIS

A. Choice of a Mentor and Formation of a Thesis Committee

The first step in the production of the thesis is for you to contact a faculty member who will agree to serve as thesis mentor. You should consult your Chair/advisor in this choice. When you ask a faculty member to serve as mentor, you should already have a clear, thorough, initial idea of a topic so that the faculty member will be better able to decide on the right person to guide your thesis to a successful completion. The thesis mentor will serve as the chairman of your Thesis Committee. The mentor/chairman will consult with the chairman of the department in which you are taking your degree in order to help you select an additional member to serve as the reader on your committee. The Thesis Committee will examine the thesis topic and proposal and recommend approval to the department Chair, the Director of Graduate Studies, and the Dean of Graduate Studies; guide you through the finished thesis under the direction of the mentor; and hold you to all requirements specified by the Graduate Handbook and Graduate Catalog.

B. Approval of Thesis Topic

Before beginning serious research on a topic in preparation for the thesis proposal, discuss your proposed topic with each member of your committee and with the Director of Graduate Studies. Make sure you obtain their approval for your topic

and plan of research. A form should be obtained from the Director of Graduate Studies for gathering approval signatures, which will ultimately be filed with the Registrar's Office.

C. Submission and Approval of the Thesis Proposal

Students too often have a tendency to take this step lightly, but in many ways it is one of the most important steps in the whole process. (Proper completion will save endless frustration, while improper handling of the matter will subsequently result in serious problems.) The thesis proposal is to be presented to your Thesis Committee, which will evaluate the appropriateness or inappropriateness of your specific plans. The thesis proposal should be typed on 8 1/2 x 11 typing paper, stapled, and be 10 to 15 pages, excluding bibliography. You should submit one copy for each member of the Thesis Committee. The thesis proposal should include:

- a. A statement of the problem and the importance of the problem.
- b. A statement of the purpose of the thesis.
- c. A statement of the position to be argued in the thesis.
- d. A tentative outline of the thesis.
- e. A proposal for the chapter divisions.
- f. A summary of the argument of each chapter.
- g. A preliminary bibliography of no less than 50 entries (excluding standard reference works).

If your topic requires confidential information, all approvals from proper authorities should be obtained before submitting a proposal. The thesis proposal must follow a five-section outline:

Proposal

Section 1 - Introduction

a. Statement of the Problem

State the problem or issue to be treated in the thesis. The writing of the

thesis should be an attempt to resolve the problem raised or to contribute toward a clarification of an issue.

b. Statement of Purpose

State what you intend to accomplish in regard to the particular problem or issue. For example, is the intention to refute common notions on the problem, analyze the problem more closely, or present a new solution to the problem?

c. Statement of Importance of the Problem

At this point you should present a defense of the significance of the issue raised, why it needs to be treated, and why you are qualified to address it. You must convince your reader that the issue is worthy of a thesis and that previous literature on this issue is inadequate.

d. Statement of Position on the Problem

You should clearly indicate your view based on your research to this point in relation to the problem raised by the thesis. It is this position or thesis that you expect to establish through the writing of the thesis. Perhaps your position will be that common perceptions or common answers to the problem are all mistaken, or that you have a resolution which you believe you can establish as correct.

e. Limitations

Indicate precisely any parameters, limitations, or assumptions of your thesis. It may be necessary to spell out what you do not want to cover in order to make the thesis defensible. Limiting your research to materials in English is not an appropriate limitation.

Section 2 - Method

Describe the methods or procedures to be used in conducting the writing and

research of the thesis.

a. Research Methods

Explain broadly what type of thesis is being proposed. Is it a library thesis that compares and analyzes the results of research? Is it a descriptive study of existing data and subsequent analysis? Is it a study of a proposed questionnaire/ interview or a participant-observer study? Is it an experimental research project that will attempt to project a statistical inference to a specific population?

b. Tests or Questionnaires

Describe any existing standardized tests to be used. If you intend to develop tests or questionnaires, they should be described in general. If they have already been created, they should be appended to the proposal.

c. Data Analysis

Describe the methods of gathering and correlating any data that result from the research.

Section 3 - Proposed Development of Thesis

a. Working Outline for the Thesis

Present the proposed outline for the writing of the thesis. In the process of writing the thesis, it may become necessary to make some minor modifications. At the point of presenting the proposal, the mentor and reader need only see the basic outline.

b. Proposal for Chapter Division

State not only what the chapters will be but also why the material should be divided up according to the proposed division.

c. Proposed Summary of Each Chapter

Briefly summarize expected contents of each chapter. Be sure to show how

each chapter contributes to the overall development of the thesis. You will at this point not have confirmed all of the details of your argument, but you must be able to defend the general structure of the actual thesis.

Section 4 - Review of the Literature

a. Research Sources

State what kind of research has been done and will be done (e.g., reading, translation, personal interviews, questionnaire, etc.). Indicate also where the research will be done (e.g., colleges, universities, seminaries).

b. Working Bibliography

Present a preliminary working bibliography of at least 50 entries (excluding standard reference tools). This will inform your committee whether you are in touch with the significant works on the topic. This will also indicate whether you have read enough to be considering the specific thesis proposed and whether there are enough scholarly resource materials available for producing the thesis. Annotations, wherever possible, would be helpful, though not required.

Section 5 - Results

Indicate the specific conclusions that you hope to establish in the thesis.

It should be obvious from this information, that no student will be able to write an acceptable proposal without having completed considerable initial research and thought in relation to the topic. It is especially precarious to set forth what you intend to prove before much of the research has been completed, otherwise you will be tempted to manipulate the evidence to support your conclusions. It should also be noted that this proposal as approved by the mentor, reader, and your department chair, is an agreement about what you intend to produce. That does not necessarily mean that the thesis will be acceptable. What it does indicate is that you should not expect, later on, to be required to make radical changes in the overall structure and

content of the thesis (e.g., it should not be decided at a later date that the thesis should take a new direction not previously anticipated or that the student will need to add several more chapters that were totally unanticipated).

Because of the importance of the thesis proposal in terms of the overall project, it will not be approved until it has met both content and form requirements. Do not submit your proposal until you have carefully edited and proofread your paper. The committee has the right to refuse to read a proposal until it is in proper form.

The mentor, having approved the proposal, will discuss it with the reader in order to obtain his/her consent also. The mentor, reader, and department chair will not approve your proposal until they are satisfied that you have done an acceptable job, *no matter how many times they require you to rewrite it.*

Thesis

D. Submission of First Draft of Thesis

After the proposal has been approved and you have completed your research and written a first draft of your thesis, you should submit copies of the completed first draft for each committee member to your mentor. The form and typing of the first draft shall approximate, as closely as possible, the final draft (with the exception of the quality of paper), and shall conform to the proper standards for form. Your mentor may, at his discretion, ask for chapters to be submitted individually or he may ask for corrections in form to be made before passing copies on to the reader.

E. Return of First Draft with Corrections to the Student

The thesis mentor and reader should return the first draft to you within one month (remind your mentor of this time expectation if necessary). If it is accepted, you may proceed with final corrections and with the preparation of the final draft. If the thesis is not acceptable, you will receive corrections from the mentor and reader, and instructions on how to rewrite the draft.

F. Submission of Corrected Draft

After receiving the first draft with corrections, submit the corrected draft to

the mentor and reader. Your mentor will want to see both the copy of the first draft with corrections and the rewritten draft.

G. Return of Corrected Draft to Student

Within a month after receiving the corrected draft, the mentor and reader will return the corrected draft. At that time they will indicate whatever further changes are necessary. You may then proceed with your preparation of the final draft.

H. Final Draft

The final draft shall conform to the corrections suggested and incorporated in the earlier drafts. It must be submitted on or before the scheduled date in order to graduate (see thesis calendar below). The final draft must be prepared on heavy-stock, bond paper of 16 to 20 pound weight and 25-50 percent rag content. The original and two copies are to be submitted for grading and binding. The original will go into the university archives, and one copy will be placed in the library for circulation. The second copy of the thesis will go to the department. The final draft original is not to be a photocopy. The copies of the draft may be good quality photocopies. When photocopies are made, the copies should be done by a professional printer (our school's print shop or off campus printers) on prescribed bond paper. Computer printers must be letter quality, and the requirements for paper quality must be met. If desired, you may submit an additional copy for binding for personal use. The thesis original and copies should be placed in stationary-type boxes when presented to the reader for grading. The cover of each box should show the following identifications: 1) student name; 2) thesis title; 3) original library copy, second library copy, or department copy. Submit a thesis approval sheet for the mentor and reader to sign for each copy. These sheets must be obtained from the secretary of the School of Religion. The thesis approval page becomes page one of the final thesis. Page two of the thesis is the title page.

I. Abstract

With the final draft you must submit a one-page summary of the thesis,

specifically identifying your conclusions and primary arguments. Do not talk about the thesis but encapsulate in several paragraphs the argument of the thesis. This abstract must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies and will be distributed to the graduate faculty apprising them of the public defense. It will also be sent to abstracting services. It becomes page three of the final copy of the thesis.

J. Disclaimer

The following disclaimer will be placed by the institution on the title page of *every* thesis: “The views expressed in this thesis do not necessarily represent the views of the institution and/or of the thesis readers.”

K. Defense: Public

Under normal circumstances, the finished thesis must be openly and orally defended before a council composed of graduate faculty and the members of the Thesis Committee. Under this plan, the mentor and department chair will approve the selection of one or two additional members within the department to serve on the Thesis Committee and at least one faculty member outside the department. Under this option, at the public defense the approval of three-fourths of those sitting in council will constitute final acceptance of the thesis and its grade.

Non-public

Under this option, the department chair and mentor will approve the selection of a committee which must consist of at least one faculty member within the department in which the student is earning his degree, one graduate faculty member from the School of Religion or Liberty Theological Seminary, and one faculty member outside the School of Religion and the Seminary. This committee shall read and approve the finished thesis. No more than one negative vote will be allowed for final acceptance of the thesis and its grade. A non-public defense must be approved by your department chair. It is granted only in unusual circumstances, primarily when either the student or a committee member cannot be present for a defense. Under either plan one member may be from an institution other than Liberty if he or

she is a recognized expert on the topic.

L. Grading

The thesis will be assigned a grade by the mentor in consultation with the readers after the defense. It will be placed on the approval page and reported to the Director of Graduate Studies. The final grade will be due on the date when grades are due in the registrar's office for graduation. The chairman of your department will report this grade to the registrar. The final draft of the thesis must be worthy of a minimum grade of B.

M. Deposit with ILRC

The thesis must be deposited electronically with the Integrated Learning Resource Center (ILRC). The thesis requirement is not complete until receipt of an acceptable copy of the approved thesis is confirmed by the ILRC in accordance with ILRC deposit policies, as described below. Currently links to the various websites and forms are available at the following site: <http://www.liberty.edu/library/index.cfm?PID=10804>.

1. Complete the ILRC Thesis and Dissertation Deposit Form after the thesis is finished with all revisions and defense, and return the form to the ILRC Administrative office.
2. Create an account at the Liberty University Thesis/Dissertation Submission site (see the ILRC website for details of this process) and deposit the thesis as a PDF-formatted document. A PDF conversion utility is available.
3. You will receive an email acknowledging the submission of the work (but not its acceptance).
4. The ILRC will check for a completed Deposit Form and review the submitted work for legibility and completeness. If the ILRC finds the submission to be legible and complete, the ILRC will submit it to ProQuest/UMI Publishing Services for publication.
5. If the ILRC review finds discrepancies or problems with the submission, the ILRC will notify you with requests for changes to be completed before submission to UMI.
6. When the submission has been received by UMI, you will receive an email

receipt verifying the acceptance of the work.

7. Submit the receipt to the Mentor and Chair of your graduate program by the deadline shown below.

III. THESIS CALENDAR

The faculty have adopted the general thesis deadlines listed below. Although you should work at your own speed, you must observe these dates if you wish to graduate by the respective date. You are reminded that these are final deadlines and not target dates. In no case can the final draft be accepted or approved after April 15 for May graduation or after November 1 for December graduation. You cannot receive the degree without a graded thesis and an ILRC deposit receipt.

DEADLINES FOR COMPLETION OF THESES

(If due date falls on a weekend, 4:30 p.m. on the following Monday becomes the deadline.)

<u>PROJECT</u>	<u>MAY</u>	<u>DEC.</u>
Approval of topic by thesis committee	Sept. 15	Feb. 1
Thesis Proposal to Mentor & Reader	Oct. 15	May 1
Last possible day for late proposal with appeal for extension	Nov. 10	May 15
First draft of thesis due	Jan. 15	Aug. 1
Return of first draft from Mentor & Reader with suggested corrections	Feb. 10	Aug. 20
Corrected draft due (with initial draft included)	Mar. 1	Sept. 15
Return of corrected draft to student	Mar. 15	Oct. 5
Final draft due - set date for defense	Apr. 10	Nov. 1
Oral defense	Apr. 15	Nov. 5
Submit final approved draft online to ILRC	Apr. 20	Nov. 20
Submit ILRC deposit receipt to Mentor & Chair	May 5	Dec. 5
Final grade submitted	(Date TBA)	

IV. THESIS ACCEPTANCE AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

It is understood that the primary purpose of a thesis is academic. It will be evaluated primarily on the basis of the proficiency and breadth of research and reasoning demonstrated in the thesis. It is also understood that if you feel that your work is being judged too heavily on the basis of the professor's personal attitude, or that the professor's personal doctrinal and/or non-doctrinal commitments are overly prejudicing his assessment of your work, you have the privilege of appealing to the Dean of Graduate Studies. The Dean will appoint, if necessary, a committee of two professors (excluding the mentor and reader of the thesis) to consider the student's appeal. Should this committee decide in favor of the student, the professor will not be required to accept or sign the thesis. In this case both of the members of the Appeal Committee will sign the thesis.

The goal of all involved in the procedure must be both to uphold the highest level of academic freedom within the institution while being careful not to compromise the academic or doctrinal integrity either of the institution or the professors involved. It is assumed that in such matters all concerned will conduct themselves with utmost Christian love and consideration for one another.

Liberty University and its faculty desire that the experience of producing a thesis will be both academically rewarding and spiritually beneficial to the student. The faculty of Liberty University stand ready to do whatever they can to help make the project a good experience for all involved.

GRADUATE STUDENT ASSISTANT (GSA) OVERVIEW

The following definitions will be used for all graduate student assistants at Liberty University:

1. “Graduate Student Assistant”: GSA is the generic term employed by accrediting associations to include all of the categories below, and hence used at Liberty University only in that same meaning. All GSA’s are graduate students in the respective department’s program, assigned to a specific professor in that department for supervision and evaluation with specific responsibilities, and receiving a stipend and/or tuition rebate as determined by the department or school/college.
2. “Graduate Assistant”: Any graduate student with specific assigned instructional responsibilities.
3. “Teaching Assistant”: An advanced graduate student with a minimum of 18 graduate credit hours in the field with substantial teaching responsibilities.
4. “Teaching Fellow”: A doctoral student with a completed master’s degree (or equivalent) with full teaching responsibilities for a course.

Currently the School of Religion (SOR) at Liberty University only offers *Graduate Assistant* (GA) positions. These GA positions are offered through the Bill Bright Scholarship program. The following information is intended to offer current and potential GAs further explanations regarding duties, responsibilities and procedures concerning their positions within the School of Religion.

SELECTION PROCESS

Selections of GAs are primarily handled by the Instructional Coordinator for the SOR. Students enrolled in, or entering the MA in Religious Studies (MARS) program through the School of Religion at Liberty University will be given first priority concerning the Bill Bright Scholarship positions. After MARS students have been considered, those applicants enrolled in or entering a seminary program through Liberty Theological Seminary (LTS) will be considered. In order to be considered for a GA position, the candidate must complete an information form, an official GA application, have three letters of reference and also their transcripts sent to the Instructional Coordinator for the SOR.

After reviewing the applicants, the Instructional Coordinator for the SOR will contact the applicant for an interview. Following the interview the GA will be informed if they have been selected to receive a scholarship position. If confirmation is given by the applicant, they will be asked to sign a contract and scholarship agreement form.

APPLICATION

Applications for the Bill Bright Scholarship can be obtained after potential candidates have completed an information form concerning the Bill Bright Scholarship (available at www.liberty.edu). Each applicant should contact the Instructional Coordinator for the SOR, and an application form will be emailed to the candidate. A sample of the information form and application have been provided in Appendices A and B.

APPLICATION DEADLINE

Application Deadlines for the Graduate Assistant positions are as follows:

For GAs desiring to start at the beginning of the fall semester, an application, reference letters and transcripts must be received by the Instructional Coordinator for the SOR no later than July 15th.

For GAs desiring to start at the beginning of the spring semester, an application, reference letters and transcripts must be received by the Instructional Coordinator for the SOR no later than November 15th.

ACCEPTANCE LETTER

Upon completion of the application process, the candidate will be informed if they have been selected to receive a Bill Bright Scholarship via email or personal letter. Once confirmation regarding the position has been received by the Instructional Coordinator for the SOR, the applicant will be asked to sign the scholarship agreement form and the GA contract. A sample of the GA contract is available in Appendix C.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibilities for Graduate Assistants within the SOR will vary depending on the professor that the GA is assisting. Each GA is required to devote 20 hours per week to their GA

responsibilities. The following is a list of possible responsibilities for the GAs:

1. Participation in all undergraduate classes to which the GA is assigned.
2. Working under the direction and supervision of the professor to whom the GA is assigned and the Coordinator of SOR graduate assistance programs.
3. Leading small discussion groups throughout the semester with approximately 20–25 undergraduate students per discussion group.
4. Assisting in the grading of written assignments such as essays, papers, tests, etc.
5. Research of current topics within the specific discipline for use in discussion groups and for the use of the professor.
6. Monitoring of classrooms.
7. Monitoring of tests and quizzes.
8. Providing interaction with and availability to students at a more personal level.
9. Maintaining regular office hours throughout the week to assist students within the class.
10. Offering test review sessions to assist students in studying and reviewing for tests, midterms, finals, etc.
11. Assisting in class logistics, including room setup, sound, PowerPoint, overheads, etc.
12. When appropriate, teaching for the professor of the class section in which the GA is assisting.

REQUIREMENTS

Requirements for consideration for a GA positions within the SOR are as follows:

1. The ability to lead small group discussion sections
2. A mastery of the English language
3. An understanding of current youth culture
4. Acceptance into the MA in Religious Studies program (or accepted Seminary program)
5. Full time status within program (9 credit hours minimum)
6. Good academic standing within the MA program (3.0 GPA or higher)

COMPENSATION

All GAs will receive full tuition for the MA in Religious Studies program through Liberty University's School of Religion or accepted Seminary program through Liberty Theological

Seminary. The contract will cover 30 credit hours of education during the academic school year (July 01-June 30). Each GA must maintain a full-time status (9 hours) during the fall and spring semesters.

PROCEDURES FOR GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS APPROVAL

1. Dean's office sends GSA application to student
2. Student returns signed application to Dean's office
3. Approval process of application in Dean's office (this process takes place in each individual School/College)
4. Application to Human Resources for Background Check (keep log sheet of name of applicant and date sent to HR- check off when receive approved background check)
5. Approved application sent back to Dean's office
6. Dean's office generates contract
7. Contract and Scholarship Agreement Form sent to student for signature (*blank Scholarship forms in Financial Aid*)
8. Contract and Scholarship Agreement Form sent back from student to Dean's office
9. Contract and P-1 circulates for all signatures, AVPGS (Dr. David Beck- RH142) last
10. Contract and P-1 sent back to Dean's office from Dr. Beck
11. Original of contract and P-1 are sent to Human Resources
First time only: include P-8 with P-1 (Dr. Beck's signature required as Administrator, not Dr. Rist)
12. SCHOLARSHIP AGREEMENT FORM sent to Financial Aid (Rhonda Allbeck) signed by student and Dean along with complete list of all students
13. Financial Aid sends copy of approved Scholarship Agreement Form to the Dean's office.

TRAINING

All GAs are expected to be competent regarding general computer skills, including Microsoft Office. Upon starting their first semester, the GA will be trained in the use of Blackboard through online tutorials and/or workshops offered by the Center for Faculty Excellence at LU. GAs are also required to attend weekly meetings with the Instructional Coordinator for the SOR. During these weekly meetings, additional training will be offered as needed. Also, throughout the academic year,

articles and resources relevant to the GAs positions will be distributed to the GAs. Any other training will be coordinated through the Instructional Coordinator for the SOR.

EVALUATIONS

Evaluations will be conducted at the end of each semester by the overseeing professor. During the last two weeks of the semester, the Instructional Coordinator for the SOR will distribute the evaluation forms to the various faculty members using GAs. These forms are to be completed and returned to the Instructional Coordinator for the SOR before finals week. A sample evaluation form has been provided in Appendix D.

ATTIRE

GAs are expected to dress in a manner consistent with their positions. When assisting their professor in the classroom, GAs are to dress in professional attire, consistent with guidelines for faculty as outlined in the faculty handbook. When in the office, GAs are expected to dress consistently with the guidelines presented in the Liberty Way.

OFFICE SPACE

Office space will be coordinated through the Office Manager for the SOR, the Associate Dean for the SOR and the Instructional Coordinator for the SOR. Each GA will be provided with a LU computer and access to a phone. Specific office locations will be determined based upon the professor the GA is assisting.

OFFICE SUPPLIES

Office supplies are located in RH 109, and are coordinated through the Office Manager for the SOR. Office supplies can only be used for tasks and responsibilities related to the GAs position in the SOR. Personal use of office supplies and materials is prohibited.

OFFICE HOURS

Office hours will be coordinated through the Instructional Coordinator for the SOR and the professor the GA is assisting. The GA is required to work 20 hours per week for the Bill Bright

Scholarship. The GA must be available for a minimum of 10 hours per week in their office for assisting students. Any exceptions must be cleared by the Instructional Coordinator for the SOR.

KEYS

At the beginning of the scholarship agreement, key requests will be placed by the Instructional Coordinator for the SOR and the Office Manager for the SOR. Generally, GAs will be given access to RH 106 (Zinngrabe Lab), RH 109 (office supplies and copies), and their specific office.

CLASSROOM CONTROL

Classroom control is under the direct supervision of the professor the GA is assisting. Essential to the GA responsibilities is direct supervision of undergraduate students within the classes to which the GA is assigned. Specific policies and procedures related to each course will be coordinated with the professor the GA is assisting.

RENEWAL OF POSITION

All GAs are eligible for renewal based upon end of semester evaluations, good academic standing within degree program, a recommendation from the Instructional Coordinator for the SOR, and recommendations from the professor the GA is assisting. GA contracts follow the LU school year (July 1 – June 30). Before leaving LU after the spring semester, the GA will be asked to sign a new contract and scholarship agreement form for the next school year.

TERMINATION OF POSITION

GAs are required to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the Liberty Way (available at: <http://www.liberty.edu/studentaffairs/index.cfm?PID=1417>). Failure to complete assigned tasks and responsibilities could ultimately result in the termination of the GA's contract and the loss of academic scholarship. Issues related to the termination of a GAs position will be coordinated by the Instructional Coordinator for the SOR and the Associate Dean for the School of Religion.

APPENDIX A:
Thesis Approval Sheet
Liberty University: School of Religion
Master of Arts in Religious Studies

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

THESIS APPROVAL SHEET

GRADE

THESIS MENTOR

READER

READER

APPENDIX B:
Thesis Topic Approval Form
Liberty University: School of Religion
Master of Arts in Religious Studies

**Thesis Topic Approval
MA in Religious Studies
School of Religion
Liberty University**

Name: _____

Student ID #_____

Topic:

Thesis Title:

Prospective Date of Completion: _____

Department Chair: _____ **Date:** _____

Thesis Mentor: _____ **Date:** _____

Reader: _____ **Date:** _____

Director of Graduate Studies: _____ **Date:** _____

- 1 Copy - Registrar*
- 1 Copy - Thesis Mentor*
- 1 Copy - Reader*
- 1 Copy - Chairman (of specialization)*
- 1 Copy - Director of Graduate Studies (SOR)*

APPENDIX C:
Graduate Assistant Information Form
Liberty University: School of Religion
Bill Bright Scholarship

Personal Information

Name: Mr. Ms. _____ Date: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Email Address: _____ Student ID: _____

Please indicate the degree program you are in:

MA in Religious Studies Other _____

Have you been accepted into the program? Yes No

Desired Concentration within MA _____

Have you read the Bill Bright scholarship brochure? Yes No

Educational Background

Name of Institution	Graduation	Degree / Major:	Concentration	GPA
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Experience

Teaching and Tutoring

Institution	Dates	Position / Study
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Related Work Experience

Employer	Dates	Position
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Summarize your speaking / teaching / preaching experience: (identify kind and number)

Why are you interested in this position?

On a scale of 1-10 rate yourself in the following areas: (10 being strong, 1 being weak)

_____ Teaching	_____ Public Speaking	_____ Organization
_____ One-on-one	_____ Research	_____ Administration

References

Name / Title:	Address:	Phone:
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

APPENDIX D:
Graduate Assistant Application
Liberty University: School of Religion
Bill Bright Scholarship

If yes, describe in full, including date(s) and disposition of case.

Doctrinal Statement

We affirm our belief in one God, infinite Spirit, creator, and sustainer of all things, who exists eternally in three persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. These three are one in essence but distinct in person and function.

We affirm that the Father is the first person of the Trinity and the source of all that God is and does. From Him the Son is eternally generated and from Them the Spirit eternally proceeds. He is the designer of creation, the speaker of revelation, the author of redemption, and the sovereign of history.

We affirm that the Lord Jesus Christ is the second person of the Trinity. Eternally begotten from the Father, He is God. He was conceived by the virgin Mary through a miracle of the Holy Spirit. He lives forever as perfect God and perfect man: two distinct natures inseparably united in one person.

We affirm that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, proceeding from the Father and the Son and equal in deity. He is the giver of all life, active in the creating and ordering of the universe; He is the agent of inspiration and the new birth; He restrains sin and Satan; and He indwells and sanctifies all believers.

We affirm that all things were created by God. Angels were created as ministering agents, though some, under the leadership of Satan, fell from their sinless state to become agents of evil. The universe was created in six historical days and is continuously sustained by God; thus it both reflects His glory and reveals His truth. Human beings were directly created, not evolved, in the very image of God. As reasoning moral agents, they are responsible under God for understanding and governing themselves and the world.

We affirm that the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, though written by men, was supernaturally inspired by God so that all its words are written true revelation of God; it is therefore inerrant in the originals and authoritative in all matters. It is to be understood by all through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, its meaning determined by the historical, grammatical, and literary use of the author's language, comparing Scripture with Scripture.

We affirm that Adam, the first man, willfully disobeyed God, bringing sin and death into the world. As a result, all persons are sinners from conception, which is evidenced in their willful acts of sin; and they are therefore subject to eternal punishment, under the just condemnation of a holy God.

We affirm that Jesus Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice by the appointment of the Father. He fulfilled the demands of God by His obedient life, died on the cross in full substitution and payment for the sins of all, was buried, and on the third day He arose physically and bodily from the dead. He ascended to heaven where He now intercedes for all believers.

We affirm that each person can be saved only through the work of Jesus Christ, through repentance of sin and by faith alone in Him as Savior. The believer is declared righteous, born again by the Holy Spirit, turned from sin, and assured of heaven.

We affirm that the Holy Spirit indwells all who are born again, conforming them to the likeness of Jesus Christ. This is a process completed only in Heaven. Every believer is responsible to live in obedience to the Word of God in separation from sin.

We affirm that a church is a local assembly of baptized believers, under the discipline of the Word of God and the lordship of Christ, organized to carry out the commission to evangelize, to teach, and to administer the ordinances of believer's baptism and the Lord's table. Its offices are pastors and deacons, and it is self governing. It functions through the ministry of gifts given by the Holy Spirit to each believer.

We affirm that the return of Christ for all believers is imminent. It will be followed by seven years of great tribulation, and then the coming of Christ to establish His earthly kingdom for a thousand years. The unsaved will then be raised and judged according to their works and separated forever from God in hell. The saved, having been raised, will live forever in heaven in fellowship with God.

Please attach a brief autobiographical sketch that includes (1) your spiritual history and salvation experience, and (2) your agreement with Liberty's doctrinal position. (Be specific about any items with which you

disagree or about which you are unclear.)

Residence Status Virginia Resident ____ Out-of-State ____

Are you currently employed by LU? Yes ____ No ____

If yes, do you plan to continue working at LU if offered a graduate assistantship? Yes ____ No ____

If yes, how many hours per week will you continue to work at LU? _____ per week

Program Information (Credit hours must total at least 9 hours each semester)

Anticipated Credit Load: Fall ____ Semester ____ (credit hours)
(Please indicate year) Spring ____ Semester ____ (credit hours)

Anticipated Date of Graduation: _____ (Month/Year)

Program of Study: Master's Program ____ Doctoral ____

Specific Degree: _____

Field: _____

Concentration: _____

Assignment

(Please attach a current Resume, include all courses taken in the field, both Undergraduate and Graduate)

What hours would you be available to work? M _____ T _____ W _____ Th _____ F _____

Do you have an assignment preference? Yes ____ No ____

If yes, with whom? _____

Graduate Assistant

Have you worked as a graduate assistant in the past? Yes ____ No ____

If yes, where? _____

If yes, in which academic year did you work? _____

For whom did you work? _____ Telephone number of supervisor: _____

Teaching Assistant or Fellow

My prior GA experience includes: _____

Financial Information

Are you receiving financial support from another source(s) (i.e. VTAG, Dependent Grant-in-aid, federal grants/loans, etc.): Yes ____ No ____

If yes, what source(s)? _____

Required Attachments

- Resume
- Autobiography

I certify that the information I have submitted here is complete and true to the best of my knowledge and belief. I will notify the Office of Graduate Admissions of any changes.

Signature of Applicant _____ **Date:** _____

**Background and Reference Investigation
Authorization and Release for Employment Purposes**

As part of its employment screening and selection procedures, Liberty University (hereafter referred to as “Company”) requires that a background investigation and a check of references be conducted. The objectives of the investigation are to verify information provided during the application process, investigate references and identify any factors that might be inconsistent with Company employment requirements.

I, _____, give Company permission and authority to conduct a background (Applicant’s name) investigation and reference check into my past and current activities. I understand and consent to an investigation that may include, but is not limited to, information as to my personal character, general reputation, verification of previous employment and employment references, verification of education, credit history, motor vehicle driving record, social security wage information, criminal records and other information contained in public records.

I authorize and request any Former Employers, Schools, Police Departments, States, Cities and Counties, or any other Person to furnish Company concerning:

- | | | | |
|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| My Work Habits | Character | Criminal Record | Reasons for Termination |
| Reputation | Driver Record | Salary History | Workers’ Comp Claims |
| Education History | Credit History | | |

And all other relevant information requested by Company.

By checking this box, I am indicating my present employer should NOT be contacted.

I hereby release all Persons, Companies, Corporations, Schools, or individual from all liability and responsibility that may result from providing Company with such information as requested.

I understand that if hired, my employment is for no definite period of time, consistent with state law, and may be terminated with or without cause and with or without notice, at any time, at the option of either Company or myself. No employee, representative, manager, official or supervisor of Company other than the Human Resource Office has any authority to enter into any agreement for employment for a specified period of time or make any agreement relative to employment that is contrary to the foregoing. Any such employment agreement will be in writing, signed by the designated officer and clearly specifying its term.

If I am not hired due to information contained in the background screen report, I will be notified in writing and a copy of the said report will be supplied to me with a written summary of my rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act of 1970 as amended in 1996.

_____ Applicant’s Full Name: First, Middle, Maiden, Last	_____ Social Security Number
_____ Current Street Address	_____ City, State, Zip Code
_____ Driver’s License Number and Issuing State	_____ Date of Birth
_____ Signature	_____ Date

APPENDIX E:
Graduate Assistant Contract
Liberty University: School of Religion
Bill Bright Scholarship

Agreement Form
Graduate Assistant (GA) in the School of Religion (SOR)
Bill Bright Scholarship

General requirements: To be eligible for this position, this person must be enrolled in the MA in Religious Studies program at Liberty University (or an approved seminary program through Liberty Theological Seminary)

Responsibilities

A. General

The Graduate Assistant (GA) will work under the general supervision of the Instructional Coordinator for the SOR with specific responsibilities from the professor to whom he/she is assigned.

B. Specific requirements of GA's

1. Attend all undergraduate classes to which the GA is assigned
2. Maintain regular office hours
3. Lead weekly discussion / small groups – as directed by the primary professor
4. Bi-weekly meeting with Instructional Coordinator for the SOR (as appropriate)
5. Assist in grading of course material
6. Be available for tutoring and answering student's questions
7. Assisting in preparation of lectures – as directed by the primary professor
8. Keeping class records – excuses, class schedule, etc.
9. Assisting in class logistics, including room setup, sound, PowerPoint, overheads, etc.
10. Be available to lecture – as directed by the primary professor
11. Coordinate office space and resources under the direction of the SOR office manager.

Reimbursement:

All GA's:

- must be registered for a minimum of nine (9) credit hours of graduate work in the previously mentioned program
- will receive a full tuition waiver for their course work toward their graduate program (30 hours per academic year maximum)
- will devote twenty hours per week to GA responsibilities

Additional Requirements

1. GA's must maintain a 3.0 GPA to continue a GA assignment from semester to semester.
2. GA's work performance level based on semester reviews must be satisfactory to continue in subsequent semesters.

Time Period

This Graduate Assistant Agreement is binding for the following:

_____ for the _____ semesters.

I have read the attached job description and requirements and agree to meet assigned duties.

Printed Name of Graduate Assistant

Student Identification Number

Signature of Graduate Assistant

Date

Dr. Thomas A. Provenzola
Director of Master of Arts in Religious Studies

Date

Dr. Elmer Towns
Dean of School of Religion

Date

Dr. David Beck
Associate Dean of Graduate Studies

Date

APPENDIX F:
Graduate Assistant Supervisor Evaluation Form
Liberty University: School of Religion
Bill Bright Scholarship

GRADUATE ASSISTANT SUPERVISOR EVALUATION FORM

Name of Graduate Assistant _____

Term _____ Year _____

Instructions: Evaluate the Graduate Assistant's (GA) job performance by circling a number from 1-5 on the scale below. "1" represents "Poor" while "5" stands for "Excellent". "No Inf" stands for "No Information."

- | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|--------|
| 1. Completes assigned duties satisfactorily | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | No Inf |
| 2. Works well independently | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | No Inf |
| 3. Is ethical and professional in behavior | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | No Inf |
| 4. Shows initiative | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | No Inf |
| 5. Communicates effectively | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | No Inf |
| 6. Is an effective teacher | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | No Inf |
| 7. Overall rating of job performance | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | No Inf |

Is there additional training, etc. that you feel the GA should have:

Please give any additional feedback here:

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Supervisor

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Graduate Assistant

Date evaluation given to Graduate Assistant: _____

Please provide the GA with a copy of this form, keep one for your records, and send one to the Instructional Coordinator for the School of Religion in Religion Hall 106A.