

## Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

Program Name (no acronyms): Master of Arts in Religious Education (MARE) and Master of Theological Studies (MTS)	Department: Theological Studies
Degree or Certificate Level: Post-Baccalaureate Graduate Degree	College/School: College of Arts & Sciences
Date (Month/Year): September 2023	Assessment Contact: Rubén Rosario Rodríguez

In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected? AY 2022-2023

In what year was the program’s assessment plan most recently reviewed/updated? 2018

Is this program accredited by an external program/disciplinary/specialized accrediting organization or subject to state/licensure requirements? No

If yes, please share how this affects the program’s assessment process (e.g., number of learning outcomes assessed, mandated exams or other assessment methods, schedule or timing of assessment, etc.): N/A

### 1. Student Learning Outcomes

Which of the program’s student learning outcomes were assessed in this annual assessment cycle? (Please provide the complete list of the program’s learning outcome statements and **bold** the SLOs assessed in this cycle.)

**Learning Outcome 1:** Graduate students will demonstrate knowledge of the broad outlines of Christian scripture, Christian history, and the major theological developments in the tradition, as well as core terms, categories, and exempla that frame theological and religious studies.

### 2. Assessment Methods: Artifacts of Student Learning

Which artifacts of student learning were used to determine if students achieved the outcome(s)? Please describe the artifacts in detail, identify the course(s) in which they were collected, and if they are from program majors/graduates and/or other students. Clarify if any such courses were offered a) online, b) at the Madrid campus, or c) at any other off-campus location.

This year we decided to focus our assessment of **Learning Outcome 1** by looking at a foundational course required of all graduate students in all our graduate degree programs, **THEO 6040: Introduction to Christian Theology**, in order to evaluate how well we students know classical theological texts and the major developments in the Western Christian theological tradition. To that end we are drawing upon the following:

#### Direct Assessments

1. Coursework
2. Seminar research paper
3. Annual performance reviews (form attached)

#### Indirect Assessments

1. Program exit interview (form attached)
2. Course evaluations

### 3. Assessment Methods: Evaluation Process

What process was used to evaluate the artifacts of student learning, and by whom? Please identify the tools(s) (e.g., a rubric) used in the process and **include them in/with this report document** (please do not just refer to the assessment plan).

The department relies on instructors to be guided by the program assessment plan in implementing and evaluating student learning outcomes through coursework. Given that most graduate courses are seminars with a semester research paper, student performance in that seminar paper is our primary means of direct assessment. We also have students submit an Annual Review form which is then read and discussed by the entire graduate faculty in the process of evaluating each student's progress in the degree program. Our means of indirect assessment include student course evaluations and exit interviews of graduating students.

### 4. Data/Results

What were the results of the assessment of the learning outcome(s)? Please be specific. Does achievement differ by teaching modality (e.g., online vs. face-to-face) or on-ground location (e.g., STL campus, Madrid campus, other off-campus site)?

Our biggest concern identified in the assessment report for AY 2021-2022 is that we noticed some overlap between this course, **THEO 6040: Introduction to Christian Theology**, and another required course, **THEO 5270: Christian Tradition I**. The latter course is only required of MARE and MTS students while the former is required of all graduate students (including PhD students). Because we are a small graduate program, it is necessary to have Masters-level students in PhD-level courses. Given that this course, THEO 6040, is a required foundational course for PhD students in Christian Theology (CT), the best way to minimize the overlap with THEO 5270 is by focusing the course materials for THEO 6040 on the PhD comprehensive exam reading list.

### 5. Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions

What have you learned from these results? What does the data tell you? Address both a) learning gaps and possible curricular or pedagogical remedies, and b) strengths of curriculum and pedagogy.

The downside of having MARE and MTS students take a required PhD-level course is that THEO 6040 can be very challenging for Masters-level students. However, our instructors are aware of this imbalance and provide support to those MARE and MTS students who might be struggling. This imbalance is less problematic for students in the MTS program since the MTS degree is designed to prepare students for PhD-level work. For those students in the MARE program, whose end goal is teaching theology at a Catholic secondary school, our instructors adapt course requirements accordingly. For example, instead of requiring a seminar research paper, MARE students can develop a new course syllabus, bibliography, and pedagogical artifacts for a course they are teaching or planning to teach.

### 6. Closing the Loop: Dissemination and Use of Current Assessment Findings

**A.** When and how did your program faculty share and discuss the results and findings from this cycle of assessment?

This program assessment is part of our annual faculty retreat, part of the ongoing Graduate Studies Committee work, and is addressed during the annual performance reviews of our graduate students. Any changes to the assessment plan or learning outcomes are developed in the Graduate Studies Committee before being brought to the department as a whole for discussion and approval.

**B.** How specifically have you decided to use these findings to improve teaching and learning in your program? For

example, perhaps you've initiated one or more of the following:

Changes to the Curriculum or Pedagogies

- Course content
- Teaching techniques
- Improvements in technology
- Prerequisites
- Course sequence
- New courses
- Deletion of courses
- Changes in frequency or scheduling of course offerings

Changes to the Assessment Plan

- Student learning outcomes
- Artifacts of student learning
- Evaluation process
- Evaluation tools (e.g., rubrics)
- Data collection methods
- Frequency of data collection

Please describe the actions you are taking as a result of these findings.

The Graduate Studies Committee plans to bring a motion to the department that we ought to require THEO 6040 for ALL our PhD students, not just those in the Christian Theology (CT) track. Currently CT-track PhD students must take **THEO 6040** and **THEO 6000: Theories and Methods**, while **Christianity in Antiquity (CA)** PhD students do not take THEO 6040. These results came out of our conversations about THEO 6040 as a required course for all our MTS, MARE, and CT PhD students.

If no changes are being made, please explain why.

## 7. Closing the Loop: Review of Previous Assessment Findings and Changes

### A. What is at least one change your program has implemented in recent years as a result of previous assessment data?

As a result of previous assessment data, we have eliminated the overlap in reading material between THEO 6040 and THEO 5270, while also being more careful to expose all our graduate students to the "classic" texts of Western Christian theology. Last year we noticed that our courses tended to lean toward an engagement of more modern texts, and we have done a better job of integrating Patristic, Medieval, and Reformation texts into both these courses.

### B. How has the change/have these changes identified in 7A been assessed?

Through student annual reviews and exit interviews of graduating students. It was through exit interviews from graduating MTS students who went through the PhD application process (here and at peer institutions) that it came to light that many of them felt unprepared in the classical Catholic theological tradition.

### C. What were the findings of the assessment?

We recognized that many of our faculty were focusing on texts relevant to their own research agenda and not necessarily providing a well-rounded foundation for our graduate students, so we decided to correct this right away.

### D. How do you plan to (continue to) use this information moving forward?

The most direct and immediate course of action was to bring the required readings for THEO 6040 into line with the required readings in the comprehensive exam reading list.

**IMPORTANT: Please submit any assessment tools (e.g., artifact prompts, rubrics) with this report as separate attachments or copied and pasted/appende into this Word document. Please do not just refer to the assessment plan; the report should serve as a stand-alone document. Thank you.**



**SAINT LOUIS**  
UNIVERSITY  
— EST. 1818 —

Department of Theological Studies

## MASTERS' STUDENT ANNUAL REVIEW FORM

*Students: Please complete electronically, sign, and submit hard copy to the Director of Graduate Studies by **March 15***

### **STUDENT INFORMATION**

Date of Evaluation: _____	Phone: _____
Name: _____	Banner ID: _____
Email: _____	Mentor: _____
Graduate Program: _____	
Area of Specialization: _____	

Are you on Academic Leave?       Yes       No

If Yes, please attach a copy of your Leave Agreement to this review.

### **ACADEMIC COURSEWORK**

Previous courses: List chronologically all previous courses you have taken since enrolling at SLU, including the grades you received. Lines can be added to the table as you progress. You can find this information using Banner.

Term	Course #	Course Title	Credits	Grade

Current courses: Which courses are you taking now? Lines can be added to the table as you progress.

Course #	Course Title	Credits

## **LANGUAGE ACQUISITION**

If applicable, list any language competency exams you have taken, the dates of those exams, and their results. Provide an expected timeline for the fulfillment of all language requirements (indicating in which languages you intend to demonstrate competency, how you intend to acquire competency, and when you plan to take the competency exams).

--

## **THESIS RESEARCH**

If applicable, describe your current progress with the research requirements of the program (i.e., thesis, dissertation). Provide expected timelines, with dates, for completion of the major components of your thesis or dissertation (i.e., prospectus defense, written drafts of individual chapters, final written version, committee approval, oral defense).

--

## **ASSISTANTSHIP ACTIVITIES**

Support: Have you received financial support from either SLU or external organizations? If so, what is the source (teaching assistantship or research assistantship from department, presidential scholarship, external fellowship, etc.)? Indicate whether your source of support included a stipend and the duration of the support contract. If none, leave blank.

Term	Source and Type of Support

Teaching: In which courses and semesters have you been a Teaching Assistant? In which courses and semesters have you been the Primary Instructor? If none, leave blank.

Term	Course #	Course Title	Role

Research: With which faculty and in which semesters have you been a Research Assistant? If none, leave blank.

Term	Faculty Member	Main Activities

### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

List below all presentations at professional meetings and conferences for the current academic year. Include any presentations to occur over the rest of the academic year, including summer.

--

List below all articles or manuscripts submitted for publication this academic year, indicating the journal to which they were submitted and the results of editorial reviews.

--

List below all internal or external grant submissions (or your participation in submissions) this academic year, indicating the funding source to which they were submitted and the results of the reviews, if known.

--

Describe any specialized training in teaching. Have you completed or do you plan on completing the Certificate Program in Teaching from the Reinert Center for Transformative Teaching and Learning?

List below all internships that you have had this academic year, indicating the place, time commitment, and activities of the program.

List all professional organizations of which you are a student member, including any offices held.

Describe any professional service and/or leadership positions associated with the university, graduate education, department or program. Indicate your title and dates of service.

List any awards, honors and achievements you have received this academic year.

Are there any other factors that you would like to have included in your evaluation?



.....

**EVALUATION: TO BE COMPLETED BY THE FACULTY**

Based upon the faculty's discussion, the quality of your work was rated in each of the following areas.

	<b>Not Meeting Expectations</b>	<b>Meeting Expectations</b>
<b>Academic Quality of Coursework</b>		
<b>Language Acquisition (if applicable)</b>		
<b>Assistantship Quality and Quantity (if applicable)</b>		
<b>Collegiality</b>		

Commentary

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Director of Graduate Studies' signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## EXIT INTERVIEW: GRADUATE STUDENTS

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Program: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Track: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How would you rate your overall experience at SLU in terms of theological education?
2. Please comment on the interaction with faculty and the quality of instruction and mentoring you received as a graduate student.
3. Which courses were most valuable for you? Which were least? Were there any courses you wished could have been available? Did you have enough flexibility to take the courses that were of interest to you?
4. For MA students: did the program enable you to develop a general theological literacy by providing you with a basic background in the main areas of Catholic theology?  
  
For PhD students: did the program train you to research and teach at a high level?
5. Did you find the DTS to be a supportive community, both socially and spiritually?
6. Please comment on the structure and operation of the program. What worked well? What could be improved?
7. Is there anything else that you would like to add about the structure of our programs, student satisfaction or ideas for improvement?

8. What are your plans for after graduation?

9. Please provide your post-graduation contact information:

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address (non-SLU): \_\_\_\_\_