

DON BOSCO CENTER OF STUDIES

Paranaque City, Philippines

Research Paper Guide

Research Development & Communications Office

FIRST SEMESTER AY 2016-2017 (*Ad Experimentum*)

DBCS RESEARCH PAPER GUIDE

*This document was released **ad experimentum** on the First Semester of Academic Year 2016–2017.*

For any questions and concerns please contact us.

Research Development & Communications Office

Don Bosco Center of Studies
Michael Rua St. cor. Israel St.,
Better Living Subdivision
Paranaque City, Philippines

Phone Nos.: (+632) 8239483, 8233290, 8246787 Loc. 201

Fax No.: (+632) 8223613

Email: research@dbcs.edu.ph

Website: research.dbcs.edu.ph

INTRODUCTION: Why Research?

Research can often be seen as a burden or just another requirement to pass a course. But this view belittles the importance and significance of research not just to the successful completion of one's theological studies but also to a more relevant, fruitful, and dynamic ministry. What students learn through research should not just end up on the printed page but should also impact their current or future ministries.

Research, in the broadest sense, means drawing on our own reading and thought to say something new or helpful or provocative or timely about the Word and the life it requires; ... suggesting how some key aspect of faith might be put in the context of contemporary human questions, linking faith with the moral dilemmas of today's society, or suggesting how the Church needs to live and act if it is to be its authentic self.¹

In other words, while research is an academic exercise it has very important pastoral applications and implications. The opportunity to engage in research ought then not to be wasted, but to be seen as an important avenue, a means, by which every theologian, catechist, youth minister, and pastoral worker can further enhance his vocation and ministry, and even help others to do the same.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Students enrolled in the different programs of Don Bosco Center of Studies are asked to engage in research to further supplement the lessons in class and often for the purpose of writing papers. All researchers should follow the *DBCS House Style and Research Code of Practice*.

Part I presents the different kinds of research papers, which are divided into two major classifications: those usually required by professors as part of coursework and those required by the institution for graduation. The following information is included for each type of research paper: what it is — the basic description; what is expected from the student-writer; and when the paper is usually assigned or applied. The aim is to acquaint students with what will be expected of them; further details and instructions will depend on each professor's preferences and teaching style. A Quick Reference guide is included in the beginning of Part I for ease of reference.

Part II lists the basic steps in making a research paper to give general guidelines on what needs to be done in coming up with a good paper. Please note that further steps may be added depending on the scope and importance of the paper.

¹ Brian E. Daley, "Doers of the Word': Research and Teaching in Theology," *Theological Education*, vol. 26, no. 1, The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, accessed February 6, 2015, <http://www.ats.edu/uploads/resources/publications-presentations/theological-education/2010-theological-education-v46-n1.pdf>.

QUICK REFERENCE

REQUIRED IN COURSEWORK			
Paper	Definition	Objective	Application
A. Book Report (page 3)	Sums up the elements of the book; primarily an <i>objective</i> report	To ensure that the book is read and thoroughly understood	Any time during the course
B. Book Review (page 3)	Appraises or evaluates the book by looking at the content and form; <i>subjective</i> in approach	To enable students to analyze and assess the value of the book, and explore its relevance to the course	Any time during the course
C. Integration Paper (page 3)	Interdisciplinary writing exercise; integrates theory with life	To allow students to explore connections across two or more disciplines	May be assigned to mark a milestone in class (e.g., after discussing a major topic, a final project)
D. Reaction Paper (page 4)	Written in response to a particular lecture, reading, film, etc.	To allow students to critically and intelligently react to the topic using principles learned in class or examples from their pastoral ministry	After reading an assigned article, paper, book; viewing a film; listening to a guest lecturer; attending a symposium, etc.
E. Reflection Paper (page 4)	Involves applying one's thoughts, feelings, experiences, principles learned in class to the topic	To enable students to communicate their personal, well-thought of, significant insights on the topic	Any time during the course, to encourage students to ruminate on a topic
F. Term Paper (page 5)	The main research paper assigned in a particular course	To enable students to further expand their knowledge through serious research using a systematic or methodical approach	Usually assigned early on in the course to give students enough time for planning, research, and composition
G. Theological Paper* (page 5)	Involves developing a specific theme using Scriptures, the Fathers of the Church, and the Magisterium; it can also involve an interface with another discipline	To enable students to deepen their understanding of a theological theme	Especially useful as a concluding project after discussing a major topic in class
REQUIRED FOR GRADUATION			
Paper	Definition	Objective	Application
A. Project Paper (page 6)	A theological-pastoral paper required for an MRS degree	To allow students to offer a theory-based, concrete, user-friendly contribution on a chosen field of pastoral endeavor	Accomplished on the third year of the MRS program
B. Synthesis Paper (page 6)	A paper that brings together in a solid and systematic fashion all the themes learned in the BTh program	To allow students to demonstrate mastery of the theological discourse using a central theme of their choice	Accomplished on the fourth year of theological studies
C. Thesis Paper (page 7)	A full-blown pursuit of a focused yet expanded understanding of a specific area of inquiry in the theological-pastoral field	To allow students to provide a fresh, deepened understanding and/or to engage in exhaustive research on a particular area	Completed and defended after all the academic requirements for MATH have been accomplished

* Note that since DBCS is a School of Theology, there will be an overlapping when it comes to the Theological Paper and some of the other papers that are often required in coursework. In particular: (1) the Term Paper (the main paper assigned in the course) may be written as an extensive Theological Paper; and (2) the Integration Paper is very similar to it; the difference being that the Integration Paper highlights the interface with other disciplines, while the Theological Paper focuses more on the understanding and development of the theme using Scriptures and Tradition.

PART I: THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF RESEARCH PAPERS²

I. REQUIRED IN COURSEWORK

A. Book Report

Definition: A book report sums up the different elements of the book — including its purpose and background, the plot or the major themes discussed, the main characters or the thesis or arguments put forward, and pertinent information about the author. While the writer of the book report may also include his opinion of the book, this paper is *primarily* an objective report unlike the book review which is subjective in approach.

Objective: To ensure that students have read and thoroughly understood the assigned book, to benefit from its study, and also to share or report it to the rest of the class (in cases where different books are assigned to the students).

Application: The book report may be assigned at any time during the course depending on the professor's purpose.

B. Book Review

Definition: A book review appraises or evaluates a book by looking at the content — the relevance or merit of the narrative (for a novel, for example) or of the author's arguments, theories, findings, opinions (for a study on a particular theme, for example) — and the form, i.e., the author's writing style, as well as the presentation and packaging of the book.

² See the following web pages that were consulted for this portion:

- <http://www.booktrust.org.uk/books/teenagers/writing-tips/tips-for-writing-book-reviews/>;
- <http://classroom.synonym.com/steps-writing-reflection-paper-2543.html>;
- <http://guides.library.queensu.ca/bookreviews/writing>;
- <https://www.lhup.edu/~dsimanek/termpapr.htm>;
- <https://library.concordia.ca/help/howto/bookreports.html>;
- https://libraries.dal.ca/writing_and_styleguides/style_guides/book_reviews.html
- <http://public.wsu.edu/~moonlee/WritingReactionPaper.html>;
- <http://www.time4writing.com/writing-resources/writing-a-book-report/>;
- <http://tipsforresearchpapersandessays.blogspot.com/2008/12/how-to-write-reflection-essay.html>;
- <http://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Reflection-Paper>; and
- <http://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Term-Paper>.

See also the following books that were consulted: Nancy Jean Vyhmeister, *Quality Research Paper For Students of Religion and Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2001); Francisco M. Zulueta, Nestor Edilberto B. Costales, Jr., *Methods of Research, Thesis Writing and Applied Statistics* (Mandaluyong City: National Bookstore, 2003); Harry Teitelbaum, *How to Write a Thesis: A Guide to the Research Paper* (New York: Arco Publishing, 1989); University of Santo Tomas, *Thesis Writing Guide for UST Graduate School* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 1995).

Objective: To enable students to critically analyze an assigned book and assess its value in general and in particular also to connect if possible its relevance or lack thereof to their theological studies or pastoral ministry.

Application: The book review may be assigned at any time during the course in particular to allow students to become analytical readers and discerning consumers of information.

C. Integration Paper

Definition: An integration paper is a writing exercise that is *interdisciplinary* — i.e., it brings together the writer’s knowledge and experience in two or more disciplines, resulting in a deeper, and more sophisticated treatment of the topic in hand. It also integrates theory with life, learning with living, theology and spirituality, and scholarship with experience.

Objective: To provide students with the opportunity to explore connections and relations across two or more disciplines (for example, theology and the human sciences; theology and cosmology; theology and art), demonstrating how his knowledge and experience in one area has made a difference — perhaps, complementing, expanding, enriching — his knowledge and experience in another field; as a writing exercise, this paper requires a mature thought process, and the ability for extensive research and assimilation of data.

Application: An integration paper can be assigned in class to cap a milestone — for example, after the discussion of a major topic in the course, or as a final project.

D. Reaction Paper

Definition: A reaction paper provides students with the opportunity to generate their own ideas, opinion, and views *in response* to a particular lecture, reading, film, etc. It includes clear references to the matter the student is reacting to (e.g. a particular view being put forward by the lecturer that the student agrees or disagrees with; major points raised in an article that struck the student; a scene from a movie that the student finds crucial or important to the film narrative). The key word is “react”; thus it is not meant to report on the subject of the reaction paper (i.e. to repeat or summarize the information) but to present how the student responds to it.

Objective: To critically and intelligently react to the assigned topic; to be able to support one’s views on the matter with solid and logical reasoning — especially with principles and examples learned in class, one’s research efforts, as well as one’s own ministry and pastoral experience.

Application: Some examples of situations where reaction papers are useful include the following: after reading an assigned article, paper, or book; viewing a film in class; listening to a guest lecturer; attending a symposium.

E. Reflection Paper

Definition: A reflection paper challenges students to apply themselves to an assigned topic through self-reflection — applying their thoughts, insights, feelings, and experiences. As students of theology, this means also integrating principles learned in class or discovered in the process of research with lessons learned in pastoral ministry in order to enrich their thoughts on the topic.

Objective: To be able to communicate one's personal, well-thought of, and significant insights on a given topic.

The length of the reflection paper (which is often short) signals the importance of the ability to sift through one's thoughts and reflections and identify those that are most pertinent, and so worthy of expression.

Application: Reflection papers are often assigned at any time during the course as the professor's way of inducing students to ruminate on a topic, and so gain further insights — especially since this is not always possible during class because of the limited time.

F. Term Paper

Definition: This paper is qualified with the word “term,” meaning it is *the main research paper* that students are assigned to work on in a particular course for the given term or semester. It is thus given considerable importance, accounting for a substantial part of the final grade.

Objective: To enable students to expand further their knowledge of the course through serious research, expounding on the chosen topic, deepening their understanding of related principles and their applications, using a well-planned (i.e., methodical or systematic) approach, and so also honing their skills in organization, analysis, logic, and synthesis.

Application: The term paper is usually assigned early on in the course, giving students enough time for planning, research, and composition.

G. Theological Paper

Definition: A theological paper focuses on a specific theme and develops it using Sacred Scriptures, Fathers of the Church, and the Magisterium. It can further involve an interface (similar to the integration paper) with another discipline(s) that would further enrich the reflection on the topic in hand (for example, theology of creation and earth science).

Note that since DBCS is a School of Theology, there will be an overlapping when it comes to the Theological Paper and some of the other papers that are often required in coursework. In particular: the Term Paper (the main paper assigned in the course) may be written as an extensive Theological Paper; and the Integration Paper is very similar to it; the difference being that the Integration Paper highlights the interface with other disciplines, while the Theological

Paper focuses more on the understanding and development of the theme using Scriptures and Tradition.

Objective: To enable students to deepen their understanding of a theological theme or topic by looking at its treatment and development in Scriptures, the writings of the Fathers of the Church, and magisterial documents.

This understanding is further supplemented when integrated with knowledge from another discipline(s), allowing students to widen their perspective and see the greater implications of the theme or topic.

Application: The paper is especially useful as a concluding project after the discussion of a major topic in class.

II. REQUIRED FOR GRADUATION

A. Project Paper

Definition: This paper (normally 30–40 pages) is both an institutional and Commission on Higher Education (CHED) requirement for students of the Master’s in Religious Studies program (MRS).³ It is a theological and pastoral paper at the same time. As such, it is very practical in approach, outlook, and content.

Objective: To give students the opportunity to offer a theory-based, concrete, user-friendly contribution on a chosen field of pastoral endeavor, depending on the student’s chosen area of specialization (i.e. Youth Ministry, Catechetics, Pastoral Ministry, Salesianity).

Guided by an adviser, the student submits the completed project paper to the Institute of Catechetics and Youth Ministry (ICYM) Vice-Dean, who designates a panel of readers to whom the student will formally present the project paper (note that *this a presentation* and *not a defense*).

Application: The project paper is accomplished on the third year of the MRS program, after the student completes all the required courses and as a theological-pastoral application of what was learned.

For more information on how to write a project paper, see the *DBCS House Style and Research Code of Practice: Guide for the MRS Program*.

B. Synthesis Paper

Definition: This paper (approximately 30–40 pages) is an obligatory written requirement for all students who are finishing the Bachelor in Theology (BTh) program. A product of the Seminar on Theological Synthesis, it is an important project that caps four years of theological studies. Like the oral comprehensive exams, it enables students to bring together in a solid and systematic fashion all the themes that they learned.

Objective: To give students the opportunity to demonstrate their mastery of the entire theological discourse *by using a central theme* of personal significance to them.

Each student is required to present his paper before a panel made up of the ITF Vice-Dean, the facilitator of the Seminar on Theological Synthesis, and with his formator as observer.

Application: The synthesis paper is accomplished on the fourth year of theological studies. The seminar is held on the first semester, enabling students to work on the paper and submit it by

³ The MRS program is a non-thesis and terminal program. This means that graduates of the program would attain the *highest academic track* in this field of study, unlike, for example, graduates of Master of Arts in Theology (MATH) who can pursue further studies in their field through a doctoral program.

chapter on specified deadlines. Presentation to the panel and submission of the final work is done toward the end of the second semester.

C. Thesis Paper

Definition: This paper (normally 70–100 pages) is both an institutional and CHED requirement for students of the Master of Arts in Theology program (MATH). It follows a strict, precise, and specific methodology. It is a full-blown pursuit of a focused yet expanded understanding of a particular area of inquiry in the theological-pastoral field.

Objective: To give students the opportunity to provide a fresh, insightful, or deepened understanding of a specific theological subject that can be summarized in a single statement — the *thesis statement*; or, alternatively, to allow them to engage in extended and exhaustive research on a particular theological area of investigation with a scope and limitation that allows for both limited discussion and extended development.

Unlike a doctoral dissertation, the thesis does not aim to give an original contribution to the whole theological-pastoral discourse, but uniqueness and relative depth in perception, understanding, and insight on the chosen theme are important.

Guided by a thesis adviser, the student submits the thesis paper to the ITF Vice-Dean and defends it before a panel at the designated time. The thesis paper is reviewed by the adviser and two other readers (usually from the teaching staff), who will form part of the panel, along with the DBCS President, Dean of Studies, ITF Vice-Dean, and thesis adviser.

Application: The thesis paper is completed, submitted, and defended after all other academic requirements for MATH have been accomplished, though initial writing stages may begin much earlier. A three-unit course on Research Methodology is a prerequisite. Students writing their prospectus and proposal enroll in Thesis Writing I; they then enroll (and re-enroll, if necessary) in Thesis Writing II as they complete the rest of the thesis and until they defend it.

For more information on how to write a thesis paper, see the *DBCS House Style and Research Code of Practice: Guide for the MATH Program*.

PART II: HOW TO WRITE A RESEARCH PAPER

Each researcher may have his own style in going about a writing project, but there are certain key ingredients that are needed to help make it a success. Among these are careful planning, organization, and critical thinking, as he goes about gathering data and putting everything together. Motivation and inspiration are also key components because these will drive the researcher not only to finish the paper but to do so in an excellent way.

These basic steps in writing a research paper are meant to help students go about the process in a way that is well-planned and organized. More tasks may be added depending on the importance of the paper and its scope, or some of these tasks may be modified and adapted (in the case of a book review or a book report, for example) but the procedure⁴ described below already includes the basic guidelines in research.

1. **Selecting a topic:** The advantage of choosing your own topic is that you can select one that will motivate you, making the task worthy of pursuit and not a chore that just needs to be done. For this reason, do not select a topic arbitrarily but choose one that is in line with your interests and needs (for example, what you feel strongly about, what you are inclined to pursue, and/or what will help your ministry and spirituality, deepen further your understanding of theology, and so on). Moreover, consider the relevance of your *treatment of the topic*⁵ (helpful to the community you serve and the Church in general, in line with the signs of the times), as well as the sources available (as a practical consideration, especially if you have limited time to write a paper, make sure that there are enough or substantial sources of information that you can use).

In cases when a topic (especially one that you do not find appealing) is assigned to you, the challenge will be to discover its relevance or importance in life and ministry. The good thing about theology is that all its themes are really interrelated, so it is unlikely that you will be given something to write about that will have no impact whatsoever.

2. **Being clear on your objective(s):** Early on, you must be able to state (at least for yourself) the objective(s) of your paper; what is the aim of this writing exercise, what do you intend to accomplish in writing the paper, what will it be useful for afterwards by way of application. This will keep you from going through the project aimlessly, and will also help you assess at each stage if you are staying true to your main intention.

⁴ Since the following text is presented as a procedure, it will use the second person, addressing students directly to facilitate their reading of the guidelines.

⁵ *Treatment of the topic* refers to how you will go about writing about your chosen theme — what aspects you will focus on, what you will emphasize, prioritize, or underscore.

3. **Appreciation⁶ of sources:** The sources of information to be used for your paper (aside of course from Sacred Scriptures, the Fathers of the Church, and Church documents) ought to meet certain criteria: (1) credible (i.e., backed up by solid research, written by an authority on the subject matter — especially *the authority* when it comes to the topic, for example if you are writing on the doctrine of grace you must go to Augustine; on theology of the body, John Paul II; and, whenever possible, use the original or official text); (2) useful or relevant to your purpose (not all sources on a particular topic may be valuable to your treatment of the topic; among other things, it should also add something more than what was already discussed in class); and (3) new (whenever possible, consult the latest publications in the field of studies involved).

Appreciation of sources involves careful study — consider each source by assessing the information it contains and discerning how you can use it. Determine which sources are your main ones (i.e., where you will get most of your material for the paper), which are useful but will only be used minimally or as supporting information in the footnotes, and which can be recommended for further reading or future use, and so on. Do not be afraid of voluminous content but, at the same time, be discerning and consider what you really need for your purposes as well as how much time you have to complete the work.

When taking down notes, be sure to write down the details of the sources (including the page numbers). Also be sure to note direct quotations and distinguish these from what you paraphrased or those parts where you got the general idea only, so that you can acknowledge these properly in the footnotes when you begin writing the draft later on.

4. **Organizing your notes and outlining:** As you go through your sources, take down notes, and gather data that you will need, you will find your paper slowly taking shape. Through it all, you must ask questions that will aid in your comprehension, and search diligently and patiently for answers or, if there is nothing conclusive, for more information about the difficulty in coming up with a clear resolution.

Having studied your sources considerably; reflected on them; and noted your insights, analysis, and conclusions, outlining will be most useful in giving your paper structure and form before you sit down to compose the paper itself. The outline will serve as a guide on how your ideas will flow.

⁶ The word *appreciation* here refers to the task by which a student understands the worth, quality, or importance of the sources. See *Appreciation* (definition no. 2) in Merriam-Webster's Learner's Dictionary, accessed April 28, 2016, available in <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/appreciation>.

It may also be useful to come up with an outline even before the data is actually gathered, with key questions that will guide you as you study your sources. This could then be modified (to include more information, depending on how your research goes) and completed to include your insights, analysis, and conclusions as you organize your notes.

5. **Writing the draft:** The more systematic you are in the earlier stages, the easier it will be to compose your paper. As a general rule, it is better to write your thoughts simply and directly; avoid flowery language. The objective is to be able to communicate your thoughts in the way that others can best understand and appreciate your reflection, insights, points, and arguments. A paper is a vehicle to communicate your findings, understanding, reflection, and analysis of a given subject matter, so you must be able to explain in your own words to express your understanding. At the same time, since the paper must be well-grounded in research, it must include references to your sources and the *necessary* direct quotations⁷ that will help give weight or credence to your paper. Facilitate the discussion of your points; do not hinder it by going off-topic (footnotes may be used to present supplementary information). Discuss each point solidly and clearly before going to the next.

Be sure to follow the *DBCS House Style and Research Code of Practice*, and especially take note of *Part V: Responsible Research Guidelines* of the *Research Code of Practice*. Also be aware of the fair use policy.⁸

6. **Re-writing or editing:** Review your first draft, or ask someone else with good writing/editing skills to take a look at it and give recommendations. Polish your work. Check for grammatical and spelling errors, as well as non-compliance with the House Style.

⁷ Students should avoid the temptation of making their paper merely a compilation of quotes instead of an original paper that sprung from their own reflections, criticism, analysis, etc. of existing/published content.

⁸ According to Rich Stim, “In its most general sense, a fair use is any copying of copyrighted material done for a limited and ‘transformative’ purpose, such as *to comment upon, criticize, or parody a copyrighted work*. Such uses can be done without permission from the copyright owner” (Rich Stim, “What is Fair Use?” Stanford University Libraries, accessed April 28, 2016, <http://fairuse.stanford.edu/overview/fair-use/what-is-fair-use/>; emphasis mine). He further adds that there are four factors that judges in a copyright infringement court case use to measure fair use: “(1) The purpose and character of your use; (2) the nature of the copyrighted work; (3) the amount and substantiality of the portion taken; and (4) the effect of the use upon the potential market” (Stim, “Measuring Fair Use: The Four Factors,” Stanford University Libraries, accessed April 28, 2016, http://fairuse.stanford.edu/overview/fair-use/four-factors/#educational_fair_use_guidelines).

In general, it is wise to quote only those sections that you really need, considering also the length of the publication in question (for example, quoting two paragraphs from a hundred-page book might be acceptable but quoting three stanzas from a four-stanza poem is certainly not). There are special considerations that must be noted, depending on what the case may be. For more information on fair use and copyright laws, you can refer to <http://fairuse.stanford.edu/>.

7. **Pray, pray, pray:** At the beginning of this section, *inspiration* was mentioned as a key component that will drive the writing project. While prayer is placed here as the last step, it is actually an all-encompassing part of your task as a researcher. Begin your project with prayer, so that you may have the guidance necessary. As you go on with your work, be open to the movement of the Spirit, let Him lead you through this experience, allowing you to discover the beauty of the truths of the faith that you are so privileged to learn and their many applications for the good of the Church. And as you accomplish your task, be thankful for the many helps that have come your way.