

# Guidelines for Students Enrolling in a Research Essay

Enrolling in a Research Essay is an opportunity for able students to study a specific topic or issue. Your task is to explore an aspect, problem or question posed by contemporary theological study and to use the methods of scholarship to resolve, critically examine or to elucidate the topic. Your essay needs to be theological, well structured, limited in scope and disciplined in methodology.

A research essay can be a testing experience in that you are solely responsible for organising your progress and will be without the supportive atmosphere of fellow students in a class. You will have a supervisor appointed who will guide you through the process of research, critical reflection and writing.

## ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Students must meet the entry requirements outlined in the Course Descriptions (contained in the Academic Regulations and Calendar) to enrol in advanced research courses.

## NOTE TO STUDENTS

It is critical that students understand that this is an advanced research course that requires students to do independent research. Students will need to have access to appropriate resources. Distance students should expect to travel to Auckland to access the Carey Baptist College, Ayson Clifford Library or have access to another suitable academic library.

## WORD COUNT

### MM790 RESEARCH ESSAY

Level 7, 15 credits, maximum of 6000 words (including footnotes, excluding bibliography)

### MM821 RESEARCH ESSAY

Level 8, 30 credits, maximum of 12,000 words (including footnotes, excluding bibliography)

## STEP ONE: GENERAL RESEARCH TOPIC

Decide on the general area you wish to research and submit a brief overview of your proposed topic to the Academic Director. The Academic Director will assist you in finding a supervisor for your research.

## STEP TWO: REFINE YOUR RESEARCH TOPIC

With the supervisor's guidance select a research topic, appropriate to a 6,000 word research essay for Level 7, and a 12,000 word research essay for Level 8, within the area of your interest. Keep your topic as specific as possible so that your research is purposeful and focused. Discuss with your supervisor the rationale, objectives, strategies, and methods of theological reflection for your study.

Check library and other resources that there are written sources readily available for your research.

Check with your supervisor as to any ethical issues around your proposed research.

## STEP THREE: PREPARE A RESEARCH PROPOSAL

The proposal needs to be on the appropriate form and include the following information:

- Research Topic (primary research and 3-5 subsidiary questions)

- Reason for and outline of topic of research (no more than 1500 words)
- Outline of structure of essay
- Approximately 12–20 bibliographical items indicating resources to be used
- Proposed timeline to complete the research essay.

Level 7 Research Essay: duration of a single semester, but under some circumstances a student will be permitted to complete the course over two semesters.

Level 8 Research Essay: duration of two semesters with a due date 15 November.

#### **STEP FOUR: SUBMIT YOUR RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

Submit your research proposal to the Academic Director. Your enrolment will not be approved until the Academic Director (or Thesis Sub-Committee for a Level 8 essay) has accepted your proposal and formally appointed your supervisor. The Academic Director or your supervisor will notify you of the approval of your proposal.

#### **STEP FIVE: CONTACT YOUR SUPERVISOR**

Contact your supervisor to discuss the proposal and also plan a programme of writing deadlines for the semester ahead. Maintaining those deadlines will keep you on track to complete by the due date.

#### **STEP SIX: COMPLETE YOUR ENROLMENT**

Now that you have been accepted you can formally enrol for this course.

#### **STEP SEVEN: KEEP TRACK OF STYLE AND BIBLIOGRAPHICAL RESOURCES**

You will need to have individual chapters and subheadings within each individual chapter. The appropriate style guide to use should be discussed with your supervisor.

#### **STEP EIGHT: START WRITING**

Initially, ignore the Introduction and Conclusion to your essay. Begin writing the draft of each individual section of your outline, meeting the deadlines as agreed with your supervisor. Your work should exhibit your grasp of the relevant literature by direction citation (but without plagiarism), balanced with your own independent creative thinking. You need to keep the theological content of your essay explicit. You may want to ask your supervisor to read sections of your essay so that you have feedback on the content and style.

During the course of your writing and research, you will be expected to be in contact with your supervisor on a monthly basis. This may be a face to face meeting, or by phone and/or email. Regular progression reports will be provided to Academic Committee through the supervisor. A 6-monthly progress report is required for those undertaking a Level 8 Research Essay.

#### **STEP NINE: COMPLETE FINAL DRAFT**

When you have completed your individual sections, weave them together to make your essay read fluently throughout. Finally, write your 'Introduction' and 'Conclusion'. They are intended to preview the structure of the whole work, and to review the conclusions drawn from the research. Ensure that you take account of the marking criteria in the Research Essay Grade Sheet (available from the Academic Director).

**STEP TEN: POLISH YOUR ESSAY**

Read your completed document at least twice, taking care over the details: formatting, spelling, punctuation, footnotes and bibliographic information. It will certainly help if you ask someone else to proof-read your essay to catch any errors you may have missed.

**STEP ELEVEN: ASK YOUR SUPERVISOR TO READ YOUR FINAL ESSAY**

When your essay is nearing completion, submit it to your supervisor for final comments and corrections.

**STEP TWELVE: SUBMIT YOUR FINAL ESSAY**

Once your supervisor is satisfied, submit two copies of your essay to the Academic Director for distribution to examiners. Your essay will be graded and returned to you with the examiner's comments. The Academic Director will determine the examiners of your essay. Please note that the marking process will normally take 4-6 weeks.