



Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family at The Catholic University of America

Licentiate in Sacred Theology of Marriage and Family (S.T.L.) Program Overview

Introduction

The S.T.L. program prepares the graduate for teaching posts, especially in Roman Catholic seminaries, colleges, and universities, as well as for further studies at the doctoral level. This is a post-S.T.B. program offering further academic development and research skills in accordance with the mission statement of the Institute. As an ecclesiastical degree, the licentiate is granted by the authority of and in the name of the Holy See.

The S.T.L. program conforms in its specifications to the requirements set forth in *Veritatis Gaudium*.

Admissions Requirements

Admission to the S.T.L. program requires the pontifical Bachelor of Sacred Theology (S.T.B.). Further requirements are enumerated in the application for the program.

Degree Requirements

S.T.L. students must complete 48 credits of prescribed three-credit courses, in addition to selected seminars as announced during the course of the school year, with a grade-point average of at least 3.3 on a 4.0-point scale. S.T.L. students must write and defend a thesis and satisfactorily present a *lectio coram* in order to receive the degree.

Languages

Students are required to demonstrate reading proficiency in scholastic Latin by successful completion of a written examination administered by Institute faculty. This requirement is to be fulfilled during the first semester of residency.

Students must also demonstrate reading proficiency in a modern language from the following list: French, Spanish, Italian, or German. Proficiency can be demonstrated by successful completion of a written examination administered by Institute faculty. To satisfy the language requirement in German or French, the following CUA language courses may be substituted for the proficiency exam: TRS 501 Theological German; GER 500 Reading for Comprehension; or FREN 500 Reading for Comprehension. These courses must be completed with a grade of at least B+ (in a course with letter grades) or Pass (in a Pass/Fail course). Students wishing to register for a language course at CUA should follow the usual cross-registration procedures. This requirement must be fulfilled by the end of the third semester, but students are urged to fulfill it by the end of the first year.

Lectio Coram

S.T.L. students must satisfactorily present a *lectio coram* – a twenty-minute public lecture – during the final semester of study, to be presented on the same day as the thesis defense. Before a panel of examiners, consisting in the thesis director and two readers of the thesis, the *lectio coram* should demonstrate the candidate's competence in theology and as a teacher. It must be clearly and logically organized, manifest the candidate's familiarity with a wide range of relevant literature, and exhibit soundness of theological judgment. As the name implies, the *lectio coram* is open to the public. The thesis director will propose a topic for the lecture unrelated to the thesis. The candidate is notified of the selected topic 48 hours prior to the *lectio coram*.

The candidate may present the lecture using a one-page written outline. The lecture may not be delivered from a written text. If an outline is used by the candidate, copies must be submitted to the board prior to the lecture. At the conclusion of the lecture, the board poses questions on the presentation for 25 minutes. After the *lectio coram* each examiner gives a secret grade, and the final grade is the average of those grades. If the candidate fails this examination, he or she is not permitted to defend the thesis, which otherwise occurs immediately following the *lectio coram*. The Dean, in consultation with the chairman of the panel of examiners, will determine whether the examination may be repeated. Should a student fail a second time, he or she ceases to be a candidate for the licentiate degree.

Thesis

The thesis is an integral part of the S.T.L. curriculum, requiring several months' planning, research, analysis, exposition, revision, and discussion. It entails both the independent investigation of some significant question arising from the work of the program and a defense of the conclusions reached. It should give evidence of training in research and make a contribution to theological and/or philosophical knowledge involving a limited yet significant issue. It must demonstrate the student's familiarity with basic methods and techniques of research, mastery of a limited topic, and ability to exercise sound theological judgment and to formulate accurate conclusions. The thesis director, more a critic than a teacher, provides assistance in defining the question to be examined. The student alone is responsible for working out the question and its resolution.

Schedule of Production of the Thesis

By the end of the first semester, and in consultation with the S.T.L. Program Advisor, the student asks a faculty member to direct his thesis. Once a faculty member agrees to direct the thesis, the Program Advisor, in consultation with the thesis director, appoints two other faculty members to a thesis board. One of the two faculty members is designated the first reader of the thesis.

By midterm of the second semester, and in consultation with the thesis director, the student prepares and submits to the Program Advisor a five-page proposal, including the title; a detailed statement of the proposed topic, its background and its purpose; the methodology; and a proposed table of contents. In addition, a preliminary bibliography is submitted at this time.

Within two weeks, the thesis board meets with the candidate to discuss the proposal. The thesis director, other board members, and the Program Advisor may accept or reject the proposal, or they may specify required modifications to it (acceptance sub *conditione*). If substantial revision is required, the board meets again with the student, either accepting or rejecting the proposal or requiring further modifications. The proposal is deemed to be approved when it has been signed by the thesis director, the other two board members, and the Program Advisor. The proposal, with original signatures, is held in the student's official file.

Once the proposal has been approved, the student is free to commence writing the thesis in consultation with the thesis director and the other board members.

At least six weeks prior to the expected date of defense, and on or before the due date listed in the academic calendar, the student must submit five copies of the completed thesis to the Program Advisor. The copies must be bound with a black plastic comb or spiral binding, a black vinyl back cover, and a clear plastic front cover. The copies of the thesis are distributed to the thesis director and the other board members.

The thesis must be 60 to 70 pages in length, excluding the bibliography (page limits are strictly enforced), and written according to the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Details regarding formatting and print layout may be requested from the Assistant to the Program Advisors in Room 313.

Upon completion of the thesis, the thesis director and first reader signify their approval in writing. (The thesis director and first reader may judge the thesis substantively complete and worthy of defense, while noting some mandatory corrections to be made prior to final acceptance.) The date for the *lectio coram* and the thesis defense cannot be set prior to this written approval; approval must be received at least 30 days in advance of the defense. Also, the defense of the thesis cannot be scheduled until all language requirements have been met.

Defense of the Thesis

After successful completion of the *lectio coram*, the student must defend the thesis by oral examination, to be conducted by the thesis board (the thesis director and the two readers). The student begins with a 5-minute presentation of his thesis. The student may speak from notes but should not read from a prepared text. This presentation is followed by a 25-minute questioning period by the panel. At the end of the defense, the written thesis and the oral examination are graded separately by the members of the defense board. The votes are taken in secret and supervised by the chairman of the examination. The final grade is the average of the grades submitted by each board member. If a candidate fails this examination, he must obtain permission from the Dean to schedule another defense. A candidate will not be permitted to retake the examination until at least one semester, or an equivalent period of time, has elapsed since the date of the failure. If the student fails a second time, he or she ceases to be a candidate for the licentiate degree.

Residency

The S.T.L. program requires four semesters of full-time study in residence. In certain cases, the Dean will consider requests to fulfill course requirements on a part-time basis. All the requirements for the S.T.L. degree must be completed within five years of the date the student enters the S.T.L. program at the Institute. If a student does not complete all requirements within five years, the student may petition the Dean for a one-year extension. If a student fails to complete all requirements within this period, he or she ceases to be a candidate for the S.T.L. In all cases, total tuition payments for the degree must equal at least the cost of four full-time semesters and at least one semester of dissertation direction.