

MASTER OF DIVINITY DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The degree of Master of Divinity (M.Div.) certifies completion of a program of theological studies designed primarily, although not exclusively, to prepare the candidate for ordination to the Christian ministry. The requirements reflect the intention of YDS to provide an education that is theologically informed, professionally competent, academically rigorous, and oriented to the life of the church.

The minimum requirement for the M.Div. degree is the successful completion of seventy-two credit hours and a three-year residency (defined as enrollment in at least one three-credit course that meets on campus on a regular basis throughout the term) with the following caveats:

1. Students with heavy responsibilities outside of school are strongly advised to reduce their course load, but the total program of study for the M.Div. degree shall not be expanded beyond six years. Students will not receive financial aid for course work beyond the requirements.
2. The residency requirement of three years may be reduced when credits, up to a maximum of twenty-four hours, are transferred. In order to receive the M.Div. degree, students who transfer credits must complete at least two years of resident work at YDS, one of which must be the final year.
3. Exceptions to the final-year residency requirement may be made for students on approved exchange or joint-degree study. In all cases a minimum of forty-eight credits must be earned through course work at Yale.

Students are encouraged to elect courses in other schools or departments of the University. Any student who takes more than nine hours in another school or department of the University comes under the regulations for interdepartmental study; see Interdepartmental Studies, in the chapter Other Curricular Considerations. See the chapter Areas and Courses of Study for information about credit for undergraduate courses.

M.Div. students may opt to complete a thesis or project by following the procedures outlined below.

Minimum requirements for graduation include the following distribution of courses in the curriculum:

Area I Twelve credit hours distributed between Hebrew Bible/Old Testament and New Testament. Ordinarily, this must include at least three credit hours in Hebrew Bible Interpretation (REL 503/REL 504) and at least three credit hours in New Testament Interpretation (REL 505/REL 506). Elementary Hebrew and Greek do not meet this requirement but are counted toward the total number of hours needed for graduation.

Area II Twelve credit hours, including at least one course designated to meet the Theology requirement and one course designated to meet the Ethics requirement. Only explicitly introductory courses taught by Divinity Theology faculty may count in fulfillment of the Theology requirement; this includes Introduction to Theology (REL 600) and Systematic Theology (REL 626). The Ethics requirement is typically met by Introduction to Christian Ethics (REL 615) or Christian Ethics Seminar (REL 631). Courses that are designated as meeting the Ethics requirement introduce students in a comprehensive way to what it means to live as a Christian; they cannot simply be courses that focus on a particular moral issue, nor can they be courses in philosophical or nontheological social ethics. Only three hours of Denominational Courses may be counted toward the Area II requirement.

Area III Nine credit hours in Historical Studies, six of which must be met by any two of the following introductory courses: REL 712, REL 713, REL 714, and REL 715. Only three hours of Denominational Courses may be counted toward the Area III requirement.

Area IV Twelve credit hours, including REL 812.

Area V Nine credit hours.

YDS Internship Program See YDS Internships, in the chapter Other Curricular Considerations.

Elective Eighteen credit hours.

ADDITIONAL DISTRIBUTION REQUIREMENTS

Every M.Div. student is required to take one course (three credit hours) in a non-Christian religion or one course in the relationship between Christianity and other religions.

Every M.Div. student is required to take one course (three credit hours) in fulfillment of the diversity requirement. Courses designated as fulfilling the diversity requirement either focus on or integrate in a sustained way material on class, gender/sexuality, race/ethnicity, indigeneity, disability, and/or global/cultural diversity. Courses fulfilling these requirements foster necessary understanding and analytical skills to successfully minister in multicultural, multireligious, multiethnic contexts, with an awareness of processes that marginalize people and produce unequal power relations.

All M.Div. students are additionally required to complete the nine-hour workshop Negotiating Boundaries in Ministerial Relationships (REL 3990). This workshop is a prerequisite for all internships.

No course may be counted toward meeting the requirements simultaneously in more than one area or toward meeting more than one of the distributional requirements within a single area.

For students with special and clear vocational plans, the Professional Studies Committee may approve a course of study that differs from the indicated area minimum requirements.

The first year of study is designed to provide general orientation in the various areas of theological education.

ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENT

The M.Div. is a professional degree program, and students are expected to grow in their understanding of their own place in the community of faith; to understand the cultural realities and social settings within which religious communities live and carry out their missions; to grow in emotional maturity, personal faith, moral integrity, and social concern; and to gain capacities for growth in the practice of ministry. The faculty has established learning goals for Religious Heritage, Cultural Context, Personal and Spiritual Formation, and Capacity for Ministry and Public Leadership. It is expected that students engaged in such learning will, during the course of the degree program, gain clarity about their own place in professional ministry—ordained or nonordained—within the church or in the broader society.

In order to measure progress toward these goals, M.Div. students are required to participate in a program assessing their progress. Each student builds a portfolio of work that includes significant academic projects, creative projects, and brief essays reflecting on the goals outlined above. This portfolio is developed with the support of faculty advisers and the associate dean for ministerial and social leadership. In addition to regular conferences with an assigned academic adviser, students are also required to participate in a mid-degree consultation, based on the M.Div. portfolio. That consultation will normally include the faculty adviser, the associate dean for ministerial and social leadership or the director of Anglican studies and formation at Berkeley, and several other professionals acquainted with the student's work and focus. Each M.Div. student must participate in an End-of-Degree conversation as part of the assessment requirement.

INTERNSHIP REQUIREMENT

Students who enroll in the M.Div. program must complete four hundred hours of an internship as part of their degree requirements. Students may elect to meet this requirement in several ways. See YDS Internships, in the chapter Other Curricular Considerations, for definitive information about requirements and policies regarding internships.

THESIS AND PROJECT OPTIONS

A thesis or project is an option in the third year of the M.Div. program. Candidates interested in a thesis or project must initiate the process by selecting first and second readers (either of whom may or may not be the academic adviser) appropriate to the topic who are willing and able to work with the student. Readers will ordinarily be Yale faculty members. However, with permission of the associate dean of academic affairs, the first reader can be a part-time or visiting Yale faculty member, and the second reader may be external to Yale. Completed thesis or project proposals must be submitted no later than the end of the first week of the term in which the thesis or project will be initiated. Students are strongly encouraged to submit a proposal form at the end of the term prior to the term in which they hope to begin the thesis or project.

Key elements of the process include (1) a one-page description of the thesis or project; (2) signatures of the first reader, second reader, and academic adviser; (3) in the event the first reader is not a full-time member of the YDS faculty, a statement of support from a person who is a full-time member of the YDS faculty; (4) specification of what must be submitted as evidence of progress achieved by the Monday of the fifth week of classes in which the thesis or project is begun.

The associate dean of academic affairs reviews the completed application and makes a determination on whether or not the proposal is approved. Students who have not obtained approval prior to the start of the term in which the thesis or project will be initiated are advised to register for another class in the event that approval is not granted.

Theses or projects written for the M.Div. program are eligible for elective credit only. The length of manuscripts for the thesis or project will vary depending on the subject matter, but a one-term thesis or project is typically 30–50 pages long; a two-term thesis or project, typically 60–100 pages. All thesis and project students must register for the M.Div. Thesis or Project course (REL 3799) for one or two terms.

Further details on thesis and project requirements are described in the document “Yale Divinity School Timeline Requirements for M.A.R./M.Div. Theses,” available in the registrar's office.