



## **MDiv Student Manual**

2017-2018

## Introduction

Welcome to AMBS! We hope you find life in this community to be intellectually and spiritually invigorating.

Our seminary comprises a diverse community. Students come from many different places, from different denominations, and with different educational backgrounds. They also come with a wide range of vocational goals and academic interests. Many come to prepare for pastoral or other church-leadership ministries, some to prepare for further academic work, and others to discern their gifts and calling. The seminary has tried to design degree programs appropriate to the variety of student interests and to the needs of the church. You will find descriptions of these programs and their requirements in the catalog.

If you have applied to the MDiv program, you are already familiar with its purposes and curricular components as the catalog describes them. This manual does not replace the catalog, but it will provide more detailed information about some aspects of MDiv studies at AMBS. You may find it helpful in planning your course of study to read through the entire manual. *Appendix 3* lists dates that you will want to keep in mind. Please note that some of the dates will differ if you begin the program in Semester Two. If you have questions, now or at any time, you should feel free to ask your adviser or the MDiv director. We will try to provide any help you may need.

When you were admitted to study at AMBS, you were not formally admitted to the MDiv program. That admission normally happens at the end of your first year of study (or its equivalent). The reason for delaying this formal admission process is to give both you and the faculty with whom you work an opportunity to (re)consider your fit for the program of study that the MDiv entails, including the “ministry formation” sequence at the heart of the MDiv program.

## Program Design and Modes

The Master of Divinity degree is the normative degree to prepare persons for ordained ministry and for general pastoral and religious leadership responsibilities in congregations and other settings. It is the required degree for admission to the Doctor of Ministry degree program, and the recommended first theological degree for admission to advanced programs oriented to theological research and teaching.<sup>1</sup>

AMBS offers a fully accredited MDiv program that seeks to combine an academically rigorous and well-rounded theological education with a focus on the skills and arts of the practice of ministry in the context of personal formation in ministry. The 80-hour program is available as a distance program (“MDiv Connect”) with online and hybrid classes, and as a residential program (“MDiv Campus”). Both have been approved by the Association of Theological Schools and the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association.

### 1. MDiv Connect

MDiv Connect is a distance program with online courses (where all of the work is completed online) and hybrid courses that combine online and on-campus learning. MDiv Connect students can complete the program in five and a half years without needing to move to the campus in Elkhart at any point. The program has been designed to be completed primarily by way of online, interactive computer work. It also requires traveling to Elkhart occasionally for an intense week of face-to-face class time.

---

<sup>1</sup> This paragraph is a quotation from the ATS (Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada) Degree Program Standards book.

## 2. MDiv Campus

MDiv campus is a residential program centered on the AMBS campus in Elkhart, Indiana. MDiv Campus students can complete the program in three years.

### **MDiv Educational Goals**

Graduates with an AMBS Master of Divinity degree:

1. Are grounded in and are continuously formed by the Bible.
2. Engage their historical and theological traditions in the context of the larger Christian church.
3. Are formed by a continuing encounter with God.
4. Demonstrate personal integrity and authority in ministry.
5. Understand and creatively engage their ministry context.
6. Lead the church in fulfilling its missional calling.

### **MDiv Tracks and Majors**

#### 1. Ministry Track

The MDiv Ministry Track is designed to prepare graduates for pastoral ministry in a congregation, for pastoral care and counseling in various settings, including chaplaincy, for ministries concentrating on faith formation, and for ministries in Christian leadership. This track may be pursued via either mode (MDiv Connect or MDiv Campus). This track features three majors:

- a. Pastoral Ministry
- b. Chaplaincy
- c. Faith Formation

#### 2. Theological Studies Track

Although the MDiv Theological Studies Track remains a professional degree that combines the disciplines of biblical studies, history, theology, ethics, and practical theology with the arts and skills of ministry, the emphasis in this track is somewhat more academic. This track may be pursued only on campus (MDiv Campus). This track features three majors:

- a. Biblical Studies
- b. History, Theology, and Ethics
- c. Peace Studies

#### 3. United Methodist Master of Divinity Track

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary is approved to educate United Methodist pastoral candidates for ordination, based on our partnership with Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary (Evanston, Ill.). The “United Methodist Master of Divinity” is an adaption of the 80-hour Div Campus approved by the University Senate of the United Methodist Church. It is not available via MDiv Connect. United Methodists take 15 credit hours from G-ETS to earn a Certificate in United Methodist Studies. These courses replace others normally required in the AMBS MDiv pastoral ministry concentration and meet key United Methodist educational requirements. G-ETS courses are frequently taught online or as intensives in January or summer. The G-ETS courses cover the following areas of study: (1) United Methodist History,

Doctrine, and Polity; (2) Evangelism; (3) Mission of the Church in the World; and (4) Worship.

## **Transferring from MATS or MAPS to MDiv Programs**

Students wishing to transfer from one of the MA programs to one of the MDiv tracks should be in conversation with their adviser about their thinking. Because the LEAP week of orientation has different content for the MA programs than for the MDiv programs, some additional work may be required. In addition to filling out the required MDiv application required of all MDiv students after their first year of study, students transferring to the MDiv must:

- a. Complete the Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicator.
- b. Attend individual sessions of LEAP focusing on
  - a. Personality type; and
  - b. Conflict styles, giving and receiving feedback, and engaging differences in groups
  - c. Missional leadership, using our bodies as leaders, and leadership styles with regard to personality type.
- c. Complete a few selected readings pertaining to the above.

If for some reason a student cannot attend these sessions at the beginning of the second year, he or she must schedule one or more make-up sessions with the Director of Field Education to address these formational issues. In either case, a transfer from MA to MDiv requires a memorandum from the Director of Field Education to the Registrar and the student certifying that the remedial learning specified above has been satisfactorily completed.

## **Admission to the MDiv Program**

When a prospective student is formally admitted to study at AMBS, he or she is not formally admitted to the MDiv Program. That admission normally comes after a year of study (or its equivalent). Admission is by action of the Teaching Faculty, normally in May. In some cases, the faculty may act to admit students in the Fall. After the successful completion of at least 11 hours of coursework, a student may apply for admission by sending a completed application form to the MDiv Director (see the application form, Appendix A). The deadline for that submission is April 10 of each year. Admission to the MDiv Program is generally a prerequisite for participation in a ministry internship and in Minister in Church and World. Faculty members with knowledge and experience of the student will fill out a comparable recommendation form before the faculty as a whole take action on admission. The MDiv Director will communicate the results of the faculty's deliberation soon after the action is taken.

## **Formation in Ministry Sequence**

An important part of the MDiv program is the formation in ministry sequence. This sequence begins with the LEAP program in the first year, continues with Ministry in Church and World in the Middler year, and ends with the Capstone course in the final year. The MDiv portfolio is a witness to a student's gifts, character, and growth throughout his or her time at AMBS.

### ***Formation Portfolio***

The MDiv Formation Portfolio is a repository of documents that demonstrate student growth and learning in light of the educational goals of the MDiv program. Each student will have on Google Drive a Formation Portfolio begun during their first 30 hours of study. Items are added to the portfolio throughout the three-year ministry formation process.

Capstone faculty leaders will use the Formation Portfolio along with experiences with students in the Capstone course to complete the student's Senior Ministry Assessment. Upon

graduation, the maintenance and dissemination of the Formation Portfolio will be the student's responsibility. However, the formation and maintenance of a student's dossier (a subset of the portfolio) will be the responsibility of the MDiv Director. The Registrar's Office will delete the portfolio from Google Drive several months after graduation. AMBS will not distribute a student's Dossier to persons outside the seminary (normally to conference ministers or area church ministers) without the express written request and consent of the student.

In the course of a student's program, the Formation Portfolio should accumulate the items listed below. The starred items will be reviewed by the teaching faculty members who carry out the senior interview. These items must be posted in the student's Formation Portfolio on Google Drive by March 1 if the student wishes to graduate in May.

The Registrar's Office will create the portfolio structure within Google Drive and is responsible for posting items. People noted below as responsible for the items listed should submit them to the administrative assistant in the Registrar's Office for posting.

Document	Person responsible for submission
1. D* Student's AMBS transcript with audited Plan of Study	Registrar's Office
2. Advising sessions progress notes, as available	Student's adviser/Registrar's Office
3. The student's LEAP reflection paper	LEAP professor
4. Faculty composite recommendation to the MDiv program	MDiv Director
5. Evidence of information literacy	Writing Services director
6. * A research paper or essay submitted as a course requirement that complements the senior paper	Student
7. D* Teaching faculty final evaluation from Ministry in Church and World	MicW professor
8. D* Spiritual Formation Self-Assessment written in early spring of senior year	Student
9. D* The student's Ministry Case Study (senior paper)	Capstone professor
10. D* Senior Ministry Assessment	Capstone professor
11. D On-site supervisor final evaluation for Ministry in Church and World (MicW)	MicW professor
12. D Self-evaluation in Ministry in Church and World	Student
13. D MME (Ministry and Mission Experience) Portfolio, if applicable	Registrar's office
14. D Final evaluations from on-site supervisor(s) and faculty supervisor(s) for Supervised Ministry Experience, Clinical Pastoral Education, and/or other practica (as available)	Director of Field Education
15. D Final record from senior interview	Registrar's office
16. D Student's Ministry Formation Report (oral presentation in written form), added after the Senior Interview	Student

Conference ministers in MC USA and area church ministers in MC Canada may request a student's Dossier as they explore an initial appointment. Students from other denominations may choose to make their Dossier available to those assisting with ministerial placements.

\*Materials that form the basis for the Senior Interview

The designation "D" refers to materials that the MDiv Director will collate into one pdf file to become the student's "Dossier."

### ***A. Senior Interview***

In early February, the executive assistant to the Dean will send an email to all Capstone students inquiring about preferences for scheduling interviews. Students may recommend a member of the faculty to be their second committee member in order of preference if their adviser is also their Capstone leader. However, final selection is up to the Dean's office, which

will take into account the overall interview loads and schedules of each faculty member and the order in which preferences were received from students.

The Dean's office will communicate in writing the date of the Senior Interview and the faculty selected within two weeks of the selection of the Interview Team. The interviews will be held on March 5, 12, 19, and 26, 2018. The Dean's office will attempt to accommodate special needs with regard to scheduling.

The student's Capstone leader will chair the interview. The second member of the interview team will normally be the student's adviser. Should they be the same faculty member, the second member may come from either of the other two academic departments.

The standard form for Senior Interviews is as follows:

1. The chair welcomes the student and any guests that might be present and offers an opening prayer.
2. The chair briefly outlines the procedure for the presentation and interview that follows.
3. The student gives a 15–20 minute presentation on his or her ministry assessment.
4. The chair thanks the student and dismisses any guests that may be present.
5. The faculty members have up to 15 minutes to dialogue with the student regarding the presentation.
6. The faculty may devote up to 15 minutes to pursue additional discussion related to the student's ministry case study.
7. The faculty will devote approximately 10 minutes to a discussion of the other parts of the portfolio, affirming strengths and discussing growth areas.
8. The student will be dismissed for a short time (usually five to ten minutes) while the faculty prepare their response to the presentation, the case study, the portfolio, and the Senior Ministry Assessment. They have four options: 1) Pass with distinction, 2) Pass, 3) Possible pass, contingent on further research, reflection, and rewriting of all or part of the senior paper and/or repeating the presentation and interview, 4) Fail
9. The student is invited back into the room and informed of the team's decision. The team may also pass on words of counsel and blessing, as appropriate.
10. The student will have an opportunity to comment on his or her AMBS experience, particularly in light of the MDiv educational goals, and offer counsel to the seminary or to the faculty on the team.
11. Each member of the Interview Team will sign the student's Senior Ministry Assessment form, which is then forwarded to the dean's office, and then to the registrar's office.

## **The Thesis Option**

Some students in the Master of Divinity: Theological Studies track may petition to write a thesis. A student who successfully completes a thesis will receive six hours of course credit, which normally replace two course (general electives or electives within the major) in the MDiv program.

If you want to write a thesis, you will have to make your case! Because self-discipline and the ability to work independently are essential to a thesis project, if you have a track record of being late in submitting assignments, the MDiv Director may not approve your petition, which needs to be made before the conclusion of your second year in the program. In addition, you must have a Grade Point Average of 3.5 or better to have your petition considered.

### *The thesis petition.*

If you decide to pursue the thesis option, you should (1) read through *Appendix 1* of this manual, "The MDiv Thesis;" (2) secure a "Petition to Write a Thesis" form by downloading it from the "Forms" page on the seminary web site or asking the MDiv director for a copy; and

(3) consult with your academic adviser. Their approval will be necessary before you can proceed. *You must return the completed thesis petition, and its required attachments, to the MDiv director by May 1, unless you make other arrangements approved by the MDiv director.*

The thesis petition will ask you for the prospective title of your thesis, a brief description of your projected research, a tentative outline, and a proposed schedule for completing the thesis. It will also ask you to name your preferences for thesis supervisor and second reader. With the petition you will include a statement giving the educational rationale for writing a thesis (i.e., why it serves your theological education to do so). Your adviser will include a statement affirming your ability to write well and to complete written assignments on time. With your adviser's endorsement, the petition will come to the MDiv director for approval.

Your adviser's endorsement and the MDiv director's approval will depend on judgments about (1) the depth and breadth of your foundation in theological studies; (2) the academic quality of your course work; (3) your capacity for independent research; (4) your preparation for the specific thesis research you propose; and (5) the appropriateness of the method or procedure you propose to employ.

After the MDiv director approves your thesis petition, the dean will determine the availability of your proposed thesis supervisor and second reader.

### 1. *The Thesis Prospectus*

If the MDiv director approves your thesis petition, you will need to prepare a prospectus. *It is especially important to show in your prospectus that you have proposed a clearly defined, sharply focused, and manageable thesis.* The prospectus must include the following items:

- a. A description of the subject to be investigated in the thesis, including why this is a subject worthy of investigation within your MDiv program.
- b. A statement of the thesis that will guide your research. For example, you might write a paragraph or two summarizing the argument you intend to make.
- c. A description of the research method to be employed in the thesis, including how the method fits both the subject under investigation and the thesis guiding the research.
- d. A brief account of the current "state of the question." What are the current or prevailing views on the subject you intend to investigate? Has it been the topic of previous academic research? If so, what questions, interests, and methods have guided this research and what conclusions did it reach? Addressing these questions will locate your thesis in the context of current discussion and focus your own investigation of the topic. Thus, it will help to prepare you for items a–c, above, and item e, below.
- e. A bibliography sufficient to demonstrate the availability of resources (library and otherwise) necessary to conducting your research and your knowledge of the resources relevant to your topic.

In general, the prospectus should demonstrate to the Curriculum Committee that you have conducted basic research on your topic and are prepared to carry through with further research and writing. You might think of your prospectus as an abbreviated form of the thesis itself—subject, of course, to revision and expansion! Here is a set of questions (not necessarily an outline) to consider in your prospectus (from this site):

1. **Research Question:** Your question must be clearly stated and well-justified. Why is it a question worth answering? Why should we care what the answer is? This is the 'so what' question.
2. **Literature Review:** While the theoretical development of your topic will require some substantive literature review, you need not conduct a full-blown literature review. It is more important that you spend time thinking about these categories and issues of research design.

3. Theory: What theoretical approach will you take in your research? How do you plan to answer your research question? Are there alternative perspectives? Why is your approach appropriate for the question?
4. Hypotheses: What specific hypotheses or statements will you evaluate? How do they follow from your theory?
5. Methods: What methods will you use to assess your theory and test hypotheses? Are these the best methods for your study?
6. Data: What kinds of data will you use? How will you collect it? What is your measurement strategy? How will you operationalize variables? Do you face reliability and validity issues?
7. Allowable Conclusions: Given your data and methods, what is the scope of the conclusions or inferences you can make? What problems do you foresee?

You can download from the AMBS website a “Thesis Prospectus” form to attach to your prospectus. *Both the prospectus and the form are due in the MDiv director’s office by August 15 (or the following Monday).* Your thesis supervisor must sign the form, thereby recommending your prospectus to the Curriculum Committee. The MDiv director will then forward the prospectus to the committee for its approval.

Preparing the prospectus will already involve you in thesis research. Continuing and completing your research and writing will be your responsibility. Of course, you should consult regularly with your thesis supervisor regarding your work. It would also be wise to keep your second reader informed of your progress.

#### 4. *Thesis Time Limits*

In the semester following the approval of your thesis petition, you must register for the course “MDiv Thesis Research.” The course will carry regular tuition fees for six credit hours, normally three in each of two successive semesters.

You should aim to complete your thesis during your third year of residence, when you can still meet with your thesis supervisor, have easy access to library resources, and enjoy the luxury of being a seminary student! If you are unable to complete your thesis during the two semesters when you have registered for thesis research, you may arrange with the MDiv director and your thesis supervisor for a one-semester extension (two, if needed). You will be assessed a continuation fee each semester, equivalent to the fee for one hour of course credit, until you complete your thesis and successfully defend it (see 3.C.5, below). A Thesis Extension form, available on the seminary website, must be completed and approved. An extension will be granted only if you demonstrate progress toward completion of your thesis. In any case, you must complete your thesis no more than two years following the beginning of thesis work.

If you have not completed your thesis following a two-year extension, your file will be assigned an “inactive” status (described in 3.D, below).

If unanticipated circumstances prevent you from completing your thesis, you may appeal to have your research converted to a three- to six-hour independent study. You should appeal first to your thesis supervisor, who may recommend that you take this course of action. The appeal, initiated by you or by your thesis supervisor, would require approval of the MDiv director and the dean.

#### 5. *The Oral Defense*

When you have completed your thesis to the satisfaction of both your supervisor and the second reader, the MDiv director will convene an oral defense. You should allow your second reader time—at least two weeks—to read your completed thesis. You will also need to provide a copy of your thesis to the MDiv director at least one week prior to the oral defense, which

the MDiv director will announce publicly. It will be your responsibility, in consultation with your thesis supervisor, to secure a date and time for the oral defense.

The defense will be open to the public; at its beginning, you will have an opportunity briefly to describe your research and the conclusions you reached. Your supervisor and the second reader will then question you on any aspects of your thesis. Finally, anyone present at the oral defense may ask questions or make comments.

At the conclusion of the oral defense, your supervisor, the second reader, and the MDiv director will meet to determine whether your thesis is approved and what grade to assign it (“pass” or “fail,” or in some cases “high pass”). They *may* require you to make certain corrections or revisions. If and when your supervisor agrees that your thesis is in an acceptable form, you will provide the MDiv director with a one or two page abstract along with a “perfect” print copy and a “perfect” digital copy in pdf format.

Please note that your thesis should follow Kate L. Turabian’s *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations; Form and style: Theses, Reports, Term Papers*, by Campbell and Vaughn. Biblical Studies students may use the *SBL Handbook of Style*.

### ***B. Duration of the Program***

Students who enroll (as an example) for twelve hours of credit each semester and eight hours during other terms, including hybrids (or eleven hours each semester and fourteen hours during other terms) can complete their MDiv program in three years. Because of work, family, or other responsibilities, some students need to take a reduced course load. Others choose to extend their program over a longer period of time.

Leaves of absence, if granted, can be for one or two semesters. If discontinuing after those semesters, students have one more year to return to their studies without reapplying for admission. Each student has ten years in which to complete an MDiv degree.

## **4. Graduation**

The events surrounding graduation, especially the commencement ceremony, are the easiest and most celebrative components of the seminary’s degree programs! To enjoy them, of course, you must meet your program’s requirements for graduation. The catalog contains the official description of these requirements. In addition, the registrar’s office prepares a plan of study for each student. The plan of study lists your program’s requirements and charts your progress in meeting them. Your adviser will have a copy of your plan of study. It is important that you and your advisor, with the registrar’s help, keep the plan up to date. That way, whenever you prepare to register for the following term, you can see at a glance how many courses, which kinds of courses, required and elective, or which specific courses you have left to take before you can graduate.

According to seminary policy, you may participate in the commencement ceremonies if you fall no more than nine hours short of completing your program; in that case, you will receive a *faux* diploma. However, you must have completed and passed your senior interview to do so. If you are writing a thesis, you must have completed *and defended* the thesis. In all cases, you will truly graduate and receive your *true* diploma when you have completed any remaining requirements.

You will also receive the hearty congratulations and blessings of the faculty, staff, and administration of AMBS. Your graduation—not only with a degree, but also with a first-class theological education—is the goal toward which we all work together.

## The MDiv Thesis

The nature of a thesis will depend to some extent on its subject. Consider five sample thesis topics (not necessarily *titles*):

- (a) “The Interpretation of Isaiah in Micah 4:1–5:14.”
- (b) “Tragedy and Realism in the ‘Non-Pacifism’ of Barth, Niebuhr, and Milbank.”
- (c) “A Christian Doctrine of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom.”
- (d) “The Church’s Liturgy as Christian Formation.”

These represent different *kinds* of theses. Theses (a) – (b) are *critical* and interpretive in nature: they involve the interpretation of a circumscribed body of primary texts, or sources: the texts of Micah and Isaiah, and other Hebrew and Greek texts, in (a); the relevant writings of Barth, Niebuhr, and Milbank in (b). Both of these theses would draw on scholarly studies of the sources and the people or phenomena relevant to their topics: commentaries on Isaiah and Micah, for example, in (a); and scholarly discussion of Barth, Niebuhr, and Milbank, in (b).

By contrast, theses (c) and (d) are *constructive* in nature: they propose particular ways of understanding certain issues, problems, or practices. To be sure, a constructive thesis will also involve analysis and interpretation. For example, (c) might analyze (and hence interpret) the medieval work of Luis de Molina and the contemporary work of Alvin Plantinga on its subject, while (d) might use Catherine Pickstock’s philosophical discussion of liturgy as a framework for considering spirituality and education in the faith. However, the thesis would not have as its principal aim to present a critical assessment of the thought of de Molina and Plantinga, or of Pickstock. It would need to some critical assessment as well, but specifically in order to consider, perhaps, how their work has shaped the way we currently conceive (or misconceive) an issue, as in (c); or how it might constructively *reshape* the way we look at an issue or a set of practices, as in (d). In either case, the point of the thesis would be to propose how *we* should think more constructively about a theological and philosophical problem, or how the church might reform its liturgical understandings and practices (or its formational ones).

Granting all of that, it should be evident that all of the above would each have both critical and constructive dimensions. Each would involve a *critical investigation* or *inquiry* into some subject or combination of subjects. And each would propose particular ways, and perhaps new or better ways, that we should understand its subject(s); each would be *constructive* in that sense. Further, a thesis in any program or concentration may be (more or less) critical or constructive in nature. For example, a thesis in Christian formation may subject Christian education curricula to feminist *critique*; one in biblical studies may make a *constructive* proposal about Old Testament theology by way of *criticizing* current models from a Mennonite theological perspective, and so on.

From these reflections you may draw three inferences:

1. *Every thesis makes an argument.* In fact, “argument” is one synonym of “thesis.” To “argue” in this context simply means giving reasons for your views or claims. A thesis involves more than finding out about something. It certainly involves that! Indeed, the greater part of your thesis may well consist of what you found out in your research. But a thesis also involves an argument—a *thesis*. Your *thesis petition* will need to include a statement, in one or two sentences, of the argument you intend to make. (Before writing your thesis, you may want to read *A Rulebook for Arguments*, by Anthony Weston [Indianapolis: Hackett, 2009]. You can find it in our library [168.W53].)

2. *An argument, whether it is primarily critical or constructive, depends on criteria.* In your *thesis prospectus*, you will need to describe for the Curriculum Committee the criteria you will employ and how you will employ them. These will guide your thesis research, so it is important that you be clear about them. In a thesis like (c) or (d), for example, you may want to employ Mennonite or Methodist, or feminist or anti-racist, convictions as criteria for your constructive argument. Of course, you may discover in your research that your initial hypothesis (the argument you *thought* you would be making) was mistaken! This would be far from unusual. Though it may disappoint you, it may actually enhance the quality of your thesis. A disproved thesis remains a valid and worthwhile contribution to the field.
3. *You should be clear about the nature of your thesis, whether it is primarily critical or constructive.* Or, you should be clear about the critical and constructive components of your thesis. You may think of it this way: “What kinds of claims will I be making in my thesis, and how will I go about supporting those claims?” The claims you make in a constructive argument will depend on kinds of criteria different from those you make in a critical argument. In thesis (b), above, for example, the criteria you would use in supporting the claim that Barth, Niebuhr, and Milbank share conceptions of tragedy and realism in their rejection of pacifism, on one hand, would differ in kind from those you would employ in arguing, on the other hand, that (as we shall suppose!) Christian pacifism can adequately embrace both tragedy and realism.

If you are hoping to write a thesis, please do not let the examples in this appendix limit your imagination. Instead, consider this counsel:

- ◆ Propose a thesis topic that you find both deeply interesting and significant. Writing a thesis is hard work. If you do not find its topic compelling and significant, you probably won't do good work.
- ◆ Propose a thesis topic that you find both deeply interesting and significant, even if it falls between (or outside of) disciplinary and departmental boundaries. Your thesis supervisor and second reader may come from different departments. You may request a second reader from outside AMBS.
- ◆ If you simply want to study a subject that seminary courses do not cover, or to study it in greater depth, enroll in an Independent Study (or two) instead of proposing a thesis.
- ◆ Propose research that you will be competent to conduct. Don't propose a thesis on Cappadocian spirituality—regardless how intriguing you find the subject—if you cannot read Greek!
- ◆ Consider the research interests of seminary faculty and the areas in which they have expertise. While this bit of counsel *may* stand in tension with the first two, above, it remains worthy of your consideration.

## Important Dates, 2017–2018

These dates are approximate. For the exact dates and other important dates in the academic calendar, please consult the official academic calendar on the AMBS web site.

**August 15–26**

**LEAP**

**October 10–November 10**

**Advising and Course Selection**

**January 9**

**Semester Two Classes Begin**

If you wish to participate in Senior Interviews and graduate this Spring, you must indicate your intention to do so by this date (if you have not done so previously).

**March 5, 12, 19, 26**

**Senior Interviews**

See above for more information.

**March 6-29**

**Advising and Course Selection**

**April 15**

**Defensible Thesis Due**

**April 20**

**Application for Admission to MDiv Due**

**April 30**

**Last Possible Day for Thesis Defense**

**April 30**

**Thesis Petition**

If you plan to write a thesis in the following year, your *thesis petition* is due in the MDiv director's office by this date (see above). Please read the section on MDiv Thesis and *Appendix 1* before preparing your petition.

**May 6**

**Commencement**

**August 15**

**Thesis Prospectus**

If your petition to write a thesis has been approved, your *thesis prospectus* will be due in the MDiv director's office by this date (see above). Please reread the section on MDiv Thesis and *Appendix 1* before preparing your petition.

# AMBS

Anabaptist Mennonite  
Biblical Seminary

3003 Benham Avenue  
Elkhart, IN 46517  
574.295.3726  
[www.ambs.edu](http://www.ambs.edu)