

ANDREWS UNIVERSITY
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
MASTER OF DIVINITY EQUIVALENCY
POLICY & GUIDELINES

Purpose

To establish a standardized formula and protocol for the Master of Divinity Equivalency.

For whom is the Equivalency Intended? For students who have completed a theological /ministerial master's degree but lack the necessary requirements to enter doctoral work or for those who seek chaplaincy.

What is the Master of Divinity Equivalency?

Certain doctoral programs require a Master of Divinity (MDiv) as a prerequisite for admission. Similarly, particular chaplaincy programs require the MDiv as a prerequisite for endorsement or board approval. There are applicants, however, who have completed a Master's degree but are precluded from entering these programs because they do not have an MDiv. The MDiv Equivalency helps to bridge the gap for such students by allowing them to build upon their prior Master's degree by acquiring the total number of credits required by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) and obtaining the tools, experience, and academic training requisite for doctoral work. In short, students can obtain the equivalent of an MDiv, and thereby pursue doctoral work or secure chaplaincy endorsement, without having to complete a second Master's degree.

The Need

Many prospective students have already completed accredited Master's programs other than the MDiv. Such degrees include:

- MA in Pastoral Ministry
- MA in Youth and Young Adult Ministry
- MA in Religious Education
- MA in Religious Studies
- MA in Religion
- MA in Theological Studies
- MA in Christian Leadership
- MSA - Master of Science in Administration (Church Administration)

ATS, however, stipulates that "admission to selected doctoral programs requires the possession of an ATS-approved MDiv degree or its educational equivalent."¹

In accordance with this ATS requirement, the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary holds the same prerequisite for entrance to its doctoral programs. This prerequisite is set forth in the

¹ *ATS Standards*, 114.

Andrews University 2012-2013 Bulletin, where it states that Doctor of Ministry (DMin) and Doctor of Theology (ThD) applicants must hold “the Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent.”¹ Applicants for the PhD must also hold “either an MDiv degree (or its equivalent), or an MA in Religion (or its equivalent).”² Other programs, such as the Master in Theology (ThM) and chaplaincy endorsement/board approval, also require an Equivalency in the absence of a completed MDiv.

Equivalency Standard as per ATS

The Seminary firmly adheres to the guidelines set forth by ATS: Admission, to the DMin program requires the possession of the “MDiv or its educational equivalent.” “MDiv equivalency is defined as 72 graduate semester hours or comparable graduate credits in other systems that represent broad-based work in theology, biblical studies, and the arts of ministry *and* that include a master’s degree and significant ministerial leadership. Ministerial experience alone is not considered the equivalent of or a substitute for the master’s degree”³

Benefits

With this Equivalency standard, the Seventh-day Adventist Theological seminary will be able to:

- Clearly communicate with and advise students and other programs through the use of a standardized instrument.
- Attract a whole new cross-section of students who cannot afford a second degree due to time and financial restrictions, but who would need the Equivalency in order to commence doctoral studies. One such cross-section would be MAPMin students, since the MAPMin is otherwise a terminal degree.
- Address the needs of many students in Latin America and Europe. An increasing number of these students are obtaining Master’s degrees, but a number of them do not qualify for certain doctoral programs because they have not completed the MDiv. Many of these students may not desire a full MDiv but would consider an Equivalency. It should be noted that students from Andrews University affiliated programs in India, Romania, and Russia, who have completed the MA in Religion, could proceed straight to the PhD; but these students would need the Equivalency if they wanted to pursue other doctoral programs or chaplaincy endorsement/board approval.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Applicants for the MDiv Equivalency must meet the following minimum requirements.

Prior to Admission

- Prospective students must meet the standard admission requirements for the MDiv as outlined in the *Bulletin*.

¹ *Andrews University 2012-2013 Bulletin*, 382, 396.

² *Ibid.*, 393.

³ *The Association of Theological Schools: The commission on Accrediting 2012*, Bulletin 50, Pg. G58.

- On campus Equivalency applicants must be admitted into the Master of Divinity program.
- Applicants whose education was not in English will need to demonstrate English proficiency as per Andrews University’s admissions policy.
- Applicants must achieve intermediate-level proficiency biblical languages as a prerequisite. Proficiency can be demonstrated by class or by placement exam. The DMin program requires proficiency in one language. The PhD and ThD programs require proficiency in both Hebrew and Greek in addition to the corresponding modern language prerequisites. Students pursuing Chaplaincy endorsement will also need two languages. It is important to note that these prerequisites do not count toward the total 72 credits that are required for the Equivalency.
- Prospective students must have completed a theological or ministerial graduate degree of at least 32 credits. As per ATS standards, “the First graduate degree” must be a theological degree”¹
- Applicants from schools outside of North America may receive “Advanced Standing” (i.e., credit for their fourth year of college) if they have:
 - Earned a 4 year Bachelor of Theology degree (BTh) in a professional institution, recognized by the Adventist Accrediting Association (AAA).
 - A maximum of 18 credits may be granted for the above.
 - Completed their studies in a *Bologna Accord* country² and took courses beyond their 3rd year.
 - A maximum of 18 credits may be granted from the 4th year.
 - The fifth 5th year may be counted as Masters classes.

Note: Advanced Standing cannot be granted to equivalency students unless they have completed a Theological or Ministerial Master’s degree.

- Equivalency applicants need a minimum GPA of 2.5 to enter the program. To remain in the program, and to complete the equivalency, they should maintain a 2.75 GPA. They should also be advised about the minimum GPA requirements for the various doctoral programs (i.e., 3.25 for the DMin, and 3.5 for the PhD and ThD).

¹ *The Association of Theological Schools: The commission on Accrediting 2012, Bulletin 50, Pg. G58.*

² The *Bologna Accord* is an agreement signed by most European countries to create a more uniform higher education system. A bachelor’s degree can be earned in three years which is equivalent to America’s four-year undergraduate degrees. Participant countries are: Albania , Andorra , Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium-Flemish, Belgium-French, Bosnia & Herz., Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Rep, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Holy See, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Scotland, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, UK

After Admission

- Students with Professional MA Degrees (e.g., MA in Youth Ministry, MA in Pastoral Ministry) must take a sufficient number of additional semester credits to complete the 72-credit Equivalency.
- Students with an Academic MA in Religion do not need an Equivalency in order to enter a PhD program, but they would need the Equivalency for the DMin, ThD or chaplaincy.
- As described in the Equivalency Worksheet, Equivalency credits should be well-distributed in the following areas: Old Testament, New Testament, Theology, Christian Ministry, World Mission, Church History, and Discipleship and Religious Education. Students must take a minimum of two courses in each area, and each course for at least two credits.

Other Considerations

- Each Equivalency applicant will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, but applicants should make sure to satisfy all eligibility requirements before applying.
- Students can start the Equivalency at any time, including in the spring semester.
- Students who desire to satisfy their equivalency needs by taking classes at the SDA Theological Seminary and wish to benefit from the MDiv fee, must apply to the MDiv program.
- On-campus equivalency students are subject to all the requirements of a regular MDiv student, like chapels, convocations, week of prayer, orientation attendance, and financial policies.
- Students may also complete the Equivalency by taking courses at other accredited schools.
- Up to 8 Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) credits may be applied towards the equivalency. Standard recording fees will be assessed.
- If the student has completed CPE training, he/she will need to register those credits with Andrews in order to count for equivalency. Recording fee applies.
- Andrews off-campus equivalency students may not take independent studies.
- A maximum of 6 credits may be granted into each course subject.
- Admission to the MDiv Equivalency does not guarantee admission to a doctoral program or endorsement/board approval for chaplaincy. Rather, admission to the Equivalency signifies that the applicant has been approved to complete the coursework needed to apply to the desired program. Upon completion of all requisite courses, the MDiv office will inform the program to which the student hopes to apply when s/he has completed the Equivalency. The applicant will then be eligible to apply to that program.

EQUIVALENCY COSTS

MDiv equivalency students may take classes in a number of ways:

- **On-campus** (Regular semester classes, summer sessions and half-semester sessions)
- **One-week intensives** (On or off campus)
- **Online courses** (Seminary Distance Learning Center)

On-campus

- On-campus equivalency students will pay standard MDiv fees as any other MDiv student.
- When a student chooses to take summer or half semester courses, s/he needs to be registered as an on-campus student, admitted and paying full tuition.
- If a student is registered and paying on-campus MDiv fee and also wants to take an intensive, he/she may do so as long as it's part of their semester load.
- If an individual lacks only a few credits to qualify for the equivalency, the s/he may elect to take the credits on a PTC (permission to take classes) basis. Such individuals will be charged the MA rate and may apply for the MA discount of up to 38%.

Off Campus

- An individual may enroll in any of the following **one-week** intensives:
 - Spring: Youth Ministry.
 - Fall-Spring MAPMin intensives at NAD extension sites
 - Summer MAPMin intensives in Berrien Springs, MI
- A student will be charged the equivalent of the summer MDiv registration fee (no proration) to take up to 12 credits of the intensives referred to above during one academic year, starting with the summer semester and continuing through spring semester.
- If the student takes more than 12 credits in the academic year, s/he will be charged a second summer semester MDiv fee.
- If an off-campus student enrolls for any class other than a one-week intensive, he or she will be charged as an on campus student.

Online Courses

- Online equivalency students will follow the standard fees set in place for MDiv students.
- Successful completion of the Equivalency cannot be guaranteed through distance learning alone, since only a limited number of courses are available through this delivery.

General fees

Will apply to all on and off-campus students.

PROTOCOL FOR ADMINISTERING THE MDIV EQUIVALENCY

Application Process

- When a prospective student applies to a doctoral program, each program's office will evaluate the student's transcript in collaboration with the MDiv office. The doctoral office should not give the prospective student a report of number of credits needed until the MDiv Director approves and signs the worksheet. The student will then be referred to the MDiv office for advice on how to best fulfill those requirements.
- The MDiv director may approve, revise, or deny equivalency requests when it does not fulfill the requirements of this policy.
- The MDiv office will verify which students have been admitted to the Equivalency, and certify those who have completed it.
- If a prospective student has not completed a theological or ministerial graduate degree, whichever office s/he first visits must inform the student that s/he does not qualify.
- Equivalency students will be informed that admission to the Equivalency does not mean they have fulfilled all of the requirements for the doctoral program they seek. They will also be encouraged to verify their acceptance to the doctoral program they seek, at the appropriate time and through the required means. Students need to be apprised of all the entrance requirements for their respective doctoral program.

Dialogue and Collaboration between the MDiv Office and Doctoral Programs

- The MDiv office will work in close collaboration with the doctoral programs and their directors in the evaluation of transcript(s), the determination of additional courses needed in each area of study, and the exchange of updates on student progress.
- The MDiv office will guide Equivalency students in their studies in order to ensure that they complete the necessary courses in the proper sequence and in a timely fashion. When all courses have been completed, the MDiv program will report this to the applicable doctoral program. The student is then ready to apply to the doctoral program.

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