

Research Dissertation in Doctor of Practical Theology

The research dissertation in the Doctor of Practical Theology degree at McMaster Divinity College provides the practitioner-scholar a unique opportunity to combine practice-led research with critical theoretical reflection. The result is meant to provide an opportunity not only to refine reflection on practice but to add to the body of thought regarding this practice and the wider field of practical theology.

The research dissertation is to be 40,000-60,000 words in length, presented in suitable academic dissertation format, along with any accompanying research artifacts (surveys, interviews, artistic creations, etc.). The dissertation is regarded as acceptable for the degree if it reflects the highest standards of academic and professional rigour suitable to the field of practical theology and makes a contribution to the practice-led knowledge of the field.

The following criteria should be reflected as appropriate in the dissertation:

- Competence in identifying and reviewing relevant primary and secondary literature
- Definition of suitable problem or problems within a subject area as the basis of investigation
- Identification of suitable practices upon which to base further theorizing of the subject
- Development of suitable research theses, procedures, and implementation
- Suitable critical analysis in evaluation of theories, implications, and practices
- Suitable clarity of writing, presentation, and documentation relevant for audience of both academics and professionals
- Inclusion of appropriate practice-generated artifacts

Areas within which the Doctor of Practical Theology research dissertation may be written are intentionally broad. These include the traditional areas of theological investigation, which might include preaching, pastoral theology, hermeneutics, missional Church studies, biblical studies, Christian history and thought, or worship and liturgy, among others. Non-traditional areas may also be included, such as ecclesial symbolism as reflected in church appointments, iconography, and various realms of the visual and performing arts. These lists are not exhaustive, and we welcome other areas of practice-led research.