From: Dr. Joshua Ezra Burns  
To: Graduate students in the Department of Theology  
Re: Reviewing draft dissertation and thesis submissions

Esteemed student,

As the department’s Director of Graduate Studies, my workload is substantial. The time I have to devote to reviewing submissions of doctoral dissertation and master’s thesis draft materials is limited. Although I am committed to directing dissertations and theses, I am obliged by the demands on my time to articulate the following policies articulating (a) what you can expect of me with respect to reviewing and responding to your draft submissions, and (b) what I expect of you with respect to their preparation. These policies apply to all submissions relating to dissertations and theses inclusive of their outlines and bibliographies. Please be advised that these terms are not negotiable and are to be considered in effect immediately and until which time I no longer serve as the department’s Director of Graduate Studies.

1. When preparing your draft submission, it is your responsibility to format your citations and bibliography consistently and to an appropriate academic style. This is a requirement of both the Department of Theology and the Graduate School. I attach as appendices to this letter the relevant copy from each unit’s current policies and procedures.

2. I have a lengthy and continually repopulating to-do list. Many of the tasks on my to-do list are time-sensitive, which means I must prioritize those tasks. I tend to other, non-time-sensitive tasks in the order I receive them. As a matter of routine, I consider the review of a dissertation draft submission a non-time-sensitive task.

3. When I receive your draft submission, I will add the task of reviewing it to my to-do list at the same position where I add every other non-time-sensitive task, that is, at the bottom. Your submission will move up the list upon my completion of each task above it, that is, as I complete each task added to the list prior to my having received your submission. I will review your submission when it reaches the top of the list.

4. As I review your draft submission, I will keep count of formatting errors in your citations and bibliographical entries. Should my count exceed five formatting errors for every twenty pages of material submitted, I will stop reading your submission and send you an email advising you to proofread your citations and/or bibliography, correct all formatting and
style errors, and resubmit your work. When I receive your revised draft submission, I will add the task of reviewing it to my to-do list at the same position where I add every other non-time-sensitive task, that is, at the bottom.

I expect that might find these policies demanding. In making you accountable, however, to standards of editorial thoroughness to which you should be adhering without my express instructions, I do not consider my expectations unreasonable. I can forgive occasional mistakes. But habitual sloppiness on your part shows poor discipline and lack of respect for your reader. My time is valuable. I must allocate it equitably to all who require it, including other students whose dissertations and theses I am directing while I direct yours. I also deserve time to conduct my own research. Consequently, for me to commit more time to your needs than I commit to my own needs and the needs of your fellow students would be unfair to everyone except you.

If you intend to begin or to continue working on your dissertation or thesis under my directorship, I urge you to attend to these policies. I will enforce them strictly. So please plan ahead. When preparing draft materials, proofread your work before I have to tell you to do it. When submitting draft materials, do not expect me to get back to you with my assessment when you happen to find it most convenient. I cannot always do that. If the timeliness of my response stands to affect your enrollment eligibility, your eligibility for financial aid, or your graduation plans, please let me know about your concern at the time of your submission. I will do my best to accommodate you. In short, respect my needs and I will respect yours. The alternative means to risk potentially limitless frustration on your end regarding your rate of progress. Let us work together to avoid that outcome.

Thank you for your cooperation,

Joshua
Appendix A

Department of Theology Policies and Procedures on Style

2.12 Style Guidelines

The Department has adopted the style guidelines of *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th ed. (2017), and Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 8th ed. (2013), as its standard guidelines for all written assignments submitted in coursework as well as comprehensive papers, final projects, theses, and dissertations. Students working with ancient texts also may utilize *The SBL Handbook of Style for Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines*, 2nd ed. (2014). These volumes are available in print editions in the reference section at Raynor Library and/or in electronic editions through the Raynor Memorial Libraries [online catalogue](https://www.library.university.edu/). 

Appendix B

Graduate School Dissertation Directives on (a) Style and (b) Bibliography and References

(a) Style guides vary greatly from one field or program to another, so the student should consult his/her adviser regarding recommended style manuals to follow. If the department has no preference, the Graduate School suggests using the American Psychological Association (APA), Turabian, or the Modern Language Association of America (MLA).

(b) References cite the sources of attributable material in the body of the text. References may be cited parenthetically (MLA or APA style), footnoted at the bottom of the page or in end notes at the end of the dissertation, depending on the department’s preferred style manual. References may not be noted at the end of a chapter. The citation format must be consistent throughout the dissertation.