

**Guidelines for the Integrative Essay
to satisfy requirements for the Master of Studies Degree
in Classical and Christian Studies**

New Saint Andrews College
Moscow, ID
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I. Overview

The Integrative Essay is the capstone assignment of the M.St. degree. Students work under the supervision of a faculty mentor to compose an essay that examines texts, issues and/or events they have studied in the CCS program, integrating them around a select theme or thesis. Students defend their integrative essay before a committee of faculty.

II. Prerequisites

In order to be eligible to enroll in Integrative Essay, students must meet these two criteria: (1) student is currently matriculating in the Classical and Christian Studies Program; and (2) student has completed 20 or more credits in the M.St. program, including 3 or more credits of residency.

In order to proceed with enrollment in Integrative Essay, students must also prepare a proposal that receives approval. (See “Proposal,” below.)

III. Beginning the Process

Throughout a student’s matriculation at New Saint Andrews College, the student should be developing ideas for an integrative essay. The best ideas emerge directly out of a student’s coursework, and they take shape through interaction with classmates and faculty. (See “Requirements for Proposal” regarding suitable topics.)

Students should take initiative by reaching out to individual faculty members, to vet their specific ideas for the Integrative Essay. Such informal interactions serve three purposes: they sift the promising ideas from the weak ones, they shape promising ideas into viable proposals, and they also help identify which member of faculty would be the most appropriate mentor.

IV. Proposal

Proposal Process: Students embarking upon an Integrative Essay shall declare their aim to proceed by submitting a proposal, addressing it to both the Director of the program and the prospective faculty adviser. They may submit proposals by email. The Director, upon receiving a proposal, will confer with faculty and evaluate it. The Director will then notify the student of the faculty’s determination to either approve the proposal or return it for revision.

Proposal Components: The proposal will include the following four components:

- (1) **Abstract**—250-450 words. The abstract is a clear synopsis of the prospective essay’s main argument, including its central claim (thesis) and lines of supporting evidence. An abstract will also define the scope of the project.

While the abstract and thesis statements are to be well-developed and well-researched at the time of proposal, they are not set in stone, but may be revised by the student, in consultation with his advisor, as work progresses beyond the proposal stage.

- (2) **Background**—250-450 words. The proposal shall include an overview of the student’s pertinent background in NSA coursework and any other applicable study. This background should demonstrate the following:
 - a. The student is prepared to undertake the proposed essay;
 - b. The proposed essay entails topics or methods which are supported by resources in the college’s CCS program, and which the college faculty are equipped to support by competent advising; and
 - c. The proposed essay will meet the student’s intellectual or professional goals.
- (3) **Preliminary Bibliography**—The proposal shall include either an annotated bibliography or a bibliographical essay. This bibliographical section of the proposal shall identify the literature that is most important to the project with a brief explanation of how each key work relates to it.
- (4) **Proposed Adviser**—Identify one or more members of the NSA faculty who, in the student’s judgment, could possibly serve as an adviser for this project.

V. Committee and Committee Conference

Once a proposal is approved, the Director will collaborate with the faculty to identify suitable committee members who, together with the faculty adviser, will make up the committee. Committees will be comprised of two or three faculty members, including the adviser. The adviser serves as committee chair.

Immediately upon enrollment in Integrative Essay, the student shall calendar a conference with his committee members, a conference that shall take place within the first two weeks of the term. The purpose of this conference is to clarify the project’s scope and focus, to anticipate any problems that may lie ahead, and to provide advice that places the student on a secure footing as he or she proceeds with the Integrative Essay.

VI. Basic Requirements for Integrative Essay

Topic or Subject Area: A student’s Integrative Essay should grow out of his or her prior NSA coursework by developing ideas, topics, themes or methods that had been considered in one or (preferably) more courses. An essay may incorporate, develop or expand upon work that was previously submitted for credit. It must reflect a level of scholarship or sophistication that is appropriate to graduate-level work.

Length: An Integrative Essay is ordinarily 7,000-10,000 words in length. Projects that take other forms (e.g., original translations, school curricula) will be appropriately sized to demand approximately the same work as an essay 7,000-10,000 words.

Formatting:

- Include a title page.
- All pages except the title page shall be consecutively numbered.
- The document shall be single-sided.

- All pages must be standard letter size with portrait orientation (8.5” wide x 11” high). Only full-page tables or illustrations may be inserted in landscape orientation (11” wide x 8.5” high).
- All margins must be 1 inch. An additional half-inch gutter (to accommodate binding) is optional.
- The main body of text will be 12-point font, and paragraphs will be double-spaced. (Exceptions to double spacing include bloc quotes, captions, footnotes, bibliography entries, etc.)
- Headings, subheadings, tables, etc., must be formatted consistently throughout the document.
- Citations shall follow the Chicago Manual of Style unless a professionally-appropriate alternative is approved by the faculty adviser.
- The final document may be submitted electronically, either in PDF or MS-Word format.

VII. Oral Defense

A. Prior to Oral Defense

Within the first couple weeks of enrollment in Integrative Essay, the student should coordinate with the NSA Registrar to place the oral defense on the calendar. The student will also provide electronic copies of the completed essay to each committee member at least two weeks prior to the oral defense, and all committee members will arrive at the defense having read it and prepared to discuss it. See “XI. Tasks and Timeline...” below.

B. Oral Defense Format

The oral defense is a live meeting between the student and the committee, usually for one hour. It may be conducted in person or over live video stream. The entire proceeding will be hosted, chaired, and moderated by the faculty adviser. The adviser is responsible to secure a room and, if necessary, to confirm beforehand that all participants have access to video technology. The defense is open to enrolled NSA students, NSA faculty, and invited guests. The defense includes two segments: prepared remarks from the student followed by questions from the faculty.

The adviser, after convening the oral defense, will direct the student to offer prepared remarks of 10-12 minutes. Because the committee members will have read the student’s essay, the student should not simply restate the essay in abridged form. Rather, he should take this opportunity to offer a personal introduction to the essay by framing it within his trajectory as a scholar.

Accordingly, prepared remarks will:

- Encapsulate the entire essay into a summary of a minute or two, taking care to foreground its central features or claims.
- Tell the story of how the essay took form, from original inception through the key turning points in its development. What difficulties did the student overcome? Did the student experience any key moments of insight or serendipity?
- Identify what intellectual conversation(s) the essay speaks into. Include what issues or questions it resolves, and how the essay advances those conversations by introducing new questions or laying groundwork for further investigation. Along the way, the student may comment upon how the process refined his own thinking on these matters.

Following the student's prepared remarks, as mentioned above, the faculty will question the student. Faculty questions may seek clarification, raise challenges, test the student's command of the material, and explore the implications of the student's work.

VIII. Assessment and Completion

The Integrative Essay is graded on a pass/fail basis. Passing essays will reflect high academic standards, including clarity and professional polish in both written and oral presentation.

Following the oral defense, the committee may make any of the following determinations. In each case, the faculty adviser will supply written feedback to the student on behalf of the committee.

- Pass the Integrative Essay. The adviser will record the passing grade on behalf of the committee.
- Pass the Integrative Essay pending minor revisions. The committee will direct the student to make minor revisions and resubmit to the faculty adviser. The adviser will determine whether the revisions are satisfactory and record the passing grade on behalf of the committee.
- Fail the Integrative Essay. The committee will direct the student to make major revisions, sit again for an oral defense to be reevaluated, or both.

If the student does not pass Integrative Essay during the academic term, an incomplete may be granted in some circumstances. Otherwise, and in cases where an incomplete lapses, the student must re-enroll in Integrative Essay for one credit.

IX. Responsibilities

It is the student's responsibility to initiate contact with faculty members and to maintain appropriate channels of communication with faculty advisers and committee members. It is the student's responsibility to keep the project moving on schedule.

NSA faculty will respond to student inquiries about possible thesis projects and lend their informal advice to help students identify and refine good ideas, helping them toward a viable proposal.

Committee members will be available to lend advice as needed.

The faculty adviser is the student's mentor throughout the Integrative Essay. The adviser confers with the student about the writing process, academic inquiry, and academic standards. The adviser is also responsible to candidly apprise the student regarding his progress and whether his work measures up to academic standards. The student may want to establish a schedule of regular conferences with his adviser.

The faculty adviser serves as a liaison between the student and the faculty committee, and oversees the process by which the committee determines the student's final grade for Integrative Essay.

X. Tasks and Timeline...for the student to complete BEFORE enrolling in *Integrative Essay*

- Complete at least twenty credits
- Complete at least three residency credits (included among the twenty total credits noted above)
- Strike up conversations with faculty about potential ideas for your project; work toward a viable project and identify a suitable and appropriate faculty adviser.
- [Two months before enrollment] Submit a formal proposal to the prospective adviser with a copy to the program director.
- [One month before enrollment] Receive approval on your proposal.
- [One month before enrollment] Contact the NSA Registrar to register for Integrative Essay for the coming Fall, Spring or Summer term.

XI. Tasks and Timeline...for the student to complete DURING enrollment in *Integrative Essay*

- Week 1**..... confirm members of faculty panel
..... coordinate with adviser to schedule a conference with committee members
- Weeks 1-2**..... meet in conference with committee members
- Weeks 1-2**..... schedule oral defense with Registrar
- Two weeks prior to final defense**..... submit complete Integrative Essay to each committee member
- Weeks 4-13**..... meet for oral defense
- End of term**..... (if necessary) submit revised Integrative Essay to adviser