

# Master of Catechesis Handbook

---

## School of Theology and Religious Studies The Catholic University of America

### Introduction

The Master of Catechesis degree (MCat) is a professional degree and differs from the MA in Catechetics. The purpose of the MCat is to prepare students to be practitioners in the field of Catechesis rather than researchers in the field of Catechetics. Catechesis prepares students for “handing on” the Christian tradition; Catechetics trains students to research and develop models and theories of Catechesis.

### Purpose of the Program

The Master of Catechesis, a professional degree concentrating on catechesis and the Catholic tradition, is designed for adults intending to or presently serving the Church. Applicants in roles of parish pastoral leadership or teaching positions in catechesis and the new evangelization on the parish or diocesan level, or in parochial schools, and volunteer lay ministers can profit by an in depth examination of the catechetical, liturgical, and theological teachings of the Church. This degree provides a broad background in practical theology fostering a professional approach to catechesis within the context of the contemporary culture. The degree is a terminal degree and does not intend to prepare students for further study such as a PhD or D.Min. degree.

### Prerequisites for the MCat

- An appropriate bachelor's degree. The academic area retains the right to require additional prerequisite courses that are deemed necessary for the success of applicants in their program of studies. Six semester hours of graduate level coursework with a grade of 3.0 or above taken at another institution are, with the director's approval, applicable toward the MCat if the applicant intends to complete the degree on campus. Participation in the MCat online requires the successful completion of the courses (30 credit hours) designed specifically for the degree.
- Two letters of recommendation from persons able to evaluate the applicant's ability to successfully complete graduate studies.
- One letter of recommendation from a pastor, principal, Director of Religious Education, undergraduate professor, or diocesan leader that can testify to the applicant's ability to serve the church as a pastoral minister.

- A two page double-spaced essay by the applicant articulating his or her call to ministerial leadership in the ministry of catechesis.
- Applicants for whom English is a second language are required to show proficiency in oral and written English, usually through the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Minimally accepted TOEFL scores, when applying for graduate programs, are 550-paper; 213-computer; and 80 Internet. Students taking the TOEFL should have at least 20 out of 30 in each of the TOEFL subcategories.

## **Goals of the Program**

- To provide opportunities for students to develop a capacity for critical and constructive theological reflection.
- To develop and sharpen skills for designing, implementing, and assessing age-appropriate catechesis programs in a parish or parochial school context.
- To provide foundational courses in theology, scripture, personality and religious development, liturgical catechesis, and spirituality
- To provide opportunities to prepare and participate in liturgical prayer and sacramental rites.
- To familiarize students with the content of liturgical and catechetical church documents.
- To provide a supervised evaluation of the student's present ministry or provide an internship with supervision for those not presently engaged in a catechetical ministry.

## **Learning Outcomes**

- Students will be able to engage in theological reflection in written and oral presentations.
- Students will demonstrate an ability to apply catechetical principles by implementing a catechetical project at a local parish or place of ministry.
- Students will be able to articulate a basic understanding of the Catholic theological tradition, scripture, personality and religious development, liturgical and sacramental rites, and Christian spirituality.
- Students will be able to articulate the basic content of the general and national catechetical directories.

- Students will have opportunities to prepare liturgical experiences for catechetical program in a parish context.

## **Educational Assessment**

- Students must complete 30 semester hours of course work.
- Students must maintain a 3.0 or above grade point average.
- Students must communicate with their academic advisor at least once a semester to discuss the student's academic progress in the program.
- As part of the ministry supervision or internship, students must design a ministry project during their last academic year of coursework and implement and write up the experience (between 18-20 pages) before completing the degree.
- Students will be encouraged to prepare a professional portfolio.

## **Online Courses** (online courses offered on a two-year rotation basis):

- Forming a Moral Person (Moral Theology)
- Eucharist: the Summit and Font of Christian Life
- The New Evangelization and Catechesis (New Evangelization)
- Liturgical Catechesis I (RCIA)
- History and Theory of Catechesis (History and Theory/Pedagogy)
- Creed: Content of Christian Faith Formation (Theology of God)
- Liturgical Catechesis II (Sacraments)
- Ministry in a Multicultural Church (Ecclesiology, Models/Pedagogy of Catechesis)
- Christ the Catechist (New Testament/ Spirituality/Christology/Vocation of Catechist)
- Foundations of Catechesis (Mystagogues, Directories, Catechisms)

## **On Campus Core Courses**

- Personality and Religious Development
- Foundations in Catechetics
- History and Theory of Catechesis
- Liturgical Catechesis

## **Internship** (online and on campus component):

After completing 18 credit hours of coursework, a student may propose a ministry project to implement in the student's ministry context (online students are typically already engaged in ministry) or collaborate with the Master of Catechesis program director to explore possible ministry settings at a site near CUA or where the student resides. The internship takes place over two semesters, with the student earning 3 credit hours each semester. The 3 credit hour internship receives a Pass/Fail grade each of the two semesters.

Students may wait to begin an internship until all coursework is completed.

### **Internship for Students On Campus:**

Students completing the MCat degree on campus will explore possible ministerial internship sites with the MCat program director. The following steps guide the process:

1. The internship may take place in conjunction with coursework or after coursework is completed. Once a student has completed at least 18 credit hours of coursework, the student discusses the internship with the Program Director. Once there is agreement about when to begin the internship, the student registers for the Master of Catechesis Internship (3 credit hours for two semesters) under the direction of the program director or another faculty member delegated to serve as the internship director.
2. Student and internship director discuss possible sites for the internship
3. The internship director either encourages the student to make an initial contact with someone at the ministry site to gather information and discover possibilities (usually this is done if the student knows someone or is familiar with persons at the site) or the internship director personally makes the initial contact.
4. If both the student and internship director agree that the site seems appropriate, the internship director negotiates a meeting involving the contact person at the ministry site, the student, and him/herself (the program director). At the meeting, goals and details regarding the internship are discussed with the potential internship site-supervisor.
5. After the meeting the student and internship director make a decision about the internship site. If all parties (student, ministry site supervisor, internship director) agree that it meets the student's ministerial needs and goals, a formal agreement among the ministry site, STRS (program director and/or internship director), and the student is developed (see template for the agreement in the Appendix)
6. The agreement must be signed by the student, internship director and the internship site-supervisor. The signed agreement is to be placed in the student's electronic file and given to the STRS business manager.

7. Because the internship is 3 credit hours each semester, the student is expected to spend 5-7 hours per week (average) at the internship site each semester.
8. At the end of each semester, the ministry site (supervisor or ministry place) receives \$250 for supervising the student. The STRS business manager is responsible for this payment. The internship director is responsible for notifying the business manager in writing concerning this payment.
9. During the first semester of the internship, the on-site supervisor is to meet with the student to guide the development of a ministry project to be implemented during the second semester. In consultation with the internship director, the student is expected to do independent study on a ministry issue, the theological and historical background on the issue and develop a project addressing the ministry issue. In the course of the research, the student is to give a progress report to the internship director at least three times each semester. After the project is implemented the student evaluates the project implementation. The project is to be written up in a 18-20 page report. Further details are provided below.
10. At the end of the internship, the project director communicates with the internship supervisor for an overall evaluation of the internship experience and to express gratitude for his/her contribution to the student's successful completion of the degree.

### **Internship for Students Online:**

Students completing the internship at their ministry site must complete an internship with the same criteria as the students on campus. There are a few exceptions:

1. The internship takes place at a site where the student is already ministering
2. The supervisor is the person to whom the student is directly accountable to in ministry
3. The internship director speaks with this supervisor to explain the internship purpose and process
4. The student and the ministerial supervisor develop goals for the internship and then the student reviews these with the internship director. Once it has been approved, an agreement is formally signed by the student, internship director, program director (if not the same person) and the internship site-supervisor.

### **Project Report:**

Once the student researches a ministry issue and develops a ministry project, the project is implemented. After the project is completed the student must write a 18-20 page report. The report is to include the following sections: a general introduction, theological/historical

research on the project topic, a description of the design of the project, an account of the process of implementation, an evaluation of the project as a whole, and a general conclusion. The internship director is to evaluate the paper offering comments to the student and assigning a pass/fail grade. The project report is to be placed in the student's electronic file. Students may not graduate without completing the internship and project report.

## **Admission to the Master of Catechesis Degree**

The Master of Catechesis offers three distinct programs for the degree: BA/MCat (five-year plan for CUA undergraduate students majoring in Theology), MCat online, and MCat on campus.

### **BA/MCat**

Undergraduate theology majors in the School of Theology and Religious Studies may apply for the MCat degree during their junior year. If accepted, as college seniors they take four master level courses in theology (usually at the 600 level) that are applied to both the BA and then to the MCat degrees. Upon graduation with a BA, these students enter the MCat degree program with four MCat courses (12 credit hours) completed.

### **MCat Online**

Applicants for the MCat online degree program must have a bachelor degree. No undergraduate theology courses are necessary for acceptance. The online program is designed on a cycle of courses that are offered on a rotating basis. Missing a semester thus requires the student to wait until the course comes due again and will delay graduation. Typically, online students will not take courses on campus at CUA or any other institution. The online course plan is designed specifically for the MCat degree at CUA.

**Residency:** The MCat online program includes an on campus residency period of 3-5 days each summer. On campus students have many opportunities to attend STRS and University-wide presentations by scholars and experts in various academic disciplines; such opportunities are not afforded distance learners. Accordingly, the residency period each summer seeks to enrich the MCat program by offering students opportunities for scholarly presentations and participation in conversations on topics not covered in the online course sequence.

### **MCat on Campus**

Applicants for the MCat on campus program must have a bachelor degree. Although undergraduate courses in theology are not necessary to apply, the Program Director reserves the right to require prerequisite theology courses. These prerequisite courses

will be determined based on the applicant's experience and background in theology and ministry. Such prerequisites may be necessary since the on campus program integrates MCat students with MA and PhD students in courses that expect a basic foundation in theology. The on campus program requires four core courses. The course plan beyond the core courses is determined in collaboration with the program director and student and strives to meet the student's academic goals and interests.

Once the application process is completed the program director will contact the student to schedule a phone or on-site visit. The purpose of this visit is to discuss the program in detail and to assure the school and the student that the degree will meet the student's academic and ministerial goals.

### **Continuous Registration Requirement:**

Students must maintain continuous registration. Each semester students must enroll in courses to remain active in the degree program. Failure to register for a semester will result in an automatic dismissal from the program. A student wanting to resume study in the program must formally apply for rereadmittance into the program. Readmittance is not automatic and is granted only for a compelling reason. An application fee is also required for readmittance.

### **Registering for Courses:**

To register for courses, each student must contact his or her Academic Advisor and ask that the Advisor Hold in Cardinal Station be released. The Academic Advisor is responsible for releasing the hold so the student may register. Registration for courses must be completed before the beginning of each term (Fall, Spring, Summer). Registration dates are recorded on the CUA Academic Calendar. See: <http://trs.cua.edu/calendar.cfm>

### **Graduation:**

After successfully completing 30 credit hours of coursework and 6 credit hours of internship with a GPA of 3.0 or higher, a student is ready for graduation. The student's application for graduation must be submitted before the end of the final semester of work towards the degree. Graduation takes place three times each academic year: October, January, and May. However, there is only one graduation ceremony and that takes place in May. All students, regardless of the date of graduation (October, January, May), are encouraged to participate in the May

graduation. Information regarding the graduation ceremony, including renting academic robes, is sent during the spring semester.



## **APPENDIX A**

### **Master of Catechesis**

#### **MINISTRY INTERNSHIP AGREEMENT**

This document represents an agreement among the individuals named below for a Master of Catechesis internship required for the Master of Catechesis degree offered at The Catholic University of America in The School of Theology and Religious Studies.

This agreement describes the nature of the MCat internship and spells out the responsibilities associated with it.

NAME OF INTERN:

NAME OF SUPERVISOR:

SITE OF PASTORAL INTERNSHIP:

ADDRESS OF PASTORAL INTERNSHIP:

BEGINNING AND ENDING DATES OF INTERNSHIP:

CONTACT HOURS PER WEEK:

RESPONSIBILITIES OF INTERN:

FREQUENCY OF SUPERVISION:

By our signatures, we agree to the terms of the internship as described above.

---

INTERN

---

DATE

---

SUPERVISOR

---

DATE

---

INTERNSHIP DIRECTOR

---

DATE