

## Advising FAQs for SPS

### 1. Is there an ideal order in which to take courses?

- a. All students should enroll in 6001 their first Autumn quarter in the program.
- b. All students should take at least one core sequence (Bible, Global Christian Heritage, or Theo/Ethics) through their first year, in order to partner with the practicum course. This means taking Bible 1, 2, 3 (6010, 6040, 6070), or Global Christian Heritage 1, 2, 3 (6020, 6050, 6080), or Theology/Ethics 1, 2, 3 (6030, 6060, 6090).
- c. All students should take 6 credits (2 credits/quarter) of Graduate Core Practicum (6930) during their first full year in the program, as an extension of one core sequence (choose one: Bible, Global Christian Heritage, or Theo/Ethics).
- d. In an ideal world, it would be best to take core courses before taking non-core courses (sometimes called basic courses or elective courses). But that often doesn't work out for scheduling reasons. The only courses that you're strongly encouraged to take in a sequence are:
  - i. THEO 6740 (Preaching): take the Bible core sequence first
  - ii. Any post-core scripture course: highly encouraged to take the Bible core sequence first
  - iii. THEO 6500/6510/6511: highly encouraged to take the theology/ethics core sequence first
  - iv. Encouraged to take 6403 before 6412 *if possible*
  - v. Take Contextual Education (6940/6941) in your second year or later (or after you've taken approximately 36 credits).
- e. Note: if you want to finish your degree in the minimum amount of time, you will not be able to take core courses first and non-core courses later (see question 2, below). However, try to abide by the above list of recommendations.

### 2. I want to finish my degree as soon as possible. What should I keep in mind for class scheduling?

- a. Take 12-13 credits/quarter during the academic year (autumn, winter, spring) with none in the summer, or take a total of 36-39 credits across the entire year (autumn, winter, spring, summer).
- b. Core courses are predictably scheduled: they are offered on the same days at the same time every year, except for THEO 6720: Vocational Discernment and Discipleship (offered every year, but at different times).
- c. Non-core courses are typically offered every other year and are scheduled in different quarters and different times depending on faculty availability.
  - i. Exception: THEO 6740 (Preaching) tends to be offered slightly more often
  - ii. Exception: We tend to offer at least two post-core Scripture courses each year (THEO 6230, 6240, some sections of 6952, and some sections of 6950, depending on topics).
- d. The every-other year rotation means that if you're trying to finish quickly, you'll want to prioritize taking non-core requirements. This is particularly true if it's a requirement with no option (not a "choose two of the following four classes").

### 3. Are there course substitutions I should know about?

- a. THEO 6745: Social Entrepreneurship and Church Planting is a substitution for THEO 6742: Church Administration *where both courses are not required by the degree*. If both courses are listed in the degree requirements, then the student must take both.

### 4. Banner is confusing. How do I register?

- a. Follow the steps outlined [in this video](#). Note: you have to be signed in with your SPU username and password to view it. Closed captioning can be turned on as needed.
  - i. If you have been told that you registered for 1 credit of Graduate Core Practicum (THEO 6930) and you need to change it to 2, follow the steps at the end of this video to do so!

**5. How do I register for Contextual Education (THEO 6940/6941)?**

- a. Read over the [Contextual Education Handbook](#).
- b. If you don't have a Contextual Education site in mind, browse the list of sites.
- c. Fill out the Initial Contextual Education Contact form *the quarter before* you want to register for Contextual Education and contact the Contextual Education Coordinator. Be sure to fill out the Contact form by these deadlines:

Quarter	Deadline
Fall	June 15
Winter	October 10
Spring	January 10
Summer	April 10

- d. If you have a site but your supervisor (pastor, manager) hasn't ever supervised Contextual Education before, please have them fill out the [Contextual Education Supervisor Application form](#) and contact the professor teaching Contextual Education.
- e. If you have a site and a supervisor, please fill out the [Contextual Education Contract](#).
- f. You cannot simply register on Banner. If you have completed the Initial Contextual Education Contact form (see above) by the deadline, you should be contacted by the Contextual Education Coordinator and given permissions to register. If you miss that deadline, please contact the professor teaching Contextual Education as soon as possible. If it is too late in the quarter, you may have to take Contextual Education the following quarter. It is your responsibility to ensure that you do not miss the deadline of submitting the initial form.

**6. How do I register for THEO 6995 (Master's Thesis) or THEO 6960 (Master's Project)?**

- a. See the section on Master's Theses and Projects on the Student Portal for more information
- b. With your chosen supervisor, fill out the registration form and brief proposal and email them to the Associate Dean of SPS.
  - i. If you don't have a good idea of who would be your supervisor, skim over the faculty biographies on the SPS website and see what types of research faculty do. Contact the faculty member whose research is closest to your interests. If there isn't a clear match, contact someone whose course you enjoyed and start the conversation with them.
  - ii. If none of this research or conversation lead you to a supervisor, contact the Associate Dean for SPS.
- c. Once you have completed your project or thesis, please follow the instructions on the document for submitting it.

**7. Who is my faculty advisor?**

- a. Your faculty advisor is listed on your student profile in Banner. If no name is listed, please contact the Associate Dean for SPS as soon as possible. If you don't know how to find your student profile, [watch this video](#). Note: you have to be signed in with your SPU username and password to view it. Closed captioning can be turned on as needed.

**8. I don't know what courses are best to take.**

- a. The best place to keep track of your progress through your degree requirements is on Banner's Degree Check. If you aren't sure how to access it or how best to use it, [watch this video](#). Note: you have to be signed in with your SPU username and password to view it. Closed captioning can be turned on as needed.
  - i. Banner's Degree Check is the official record of your progress through your degree and will be the record that the Associate Dean of SPS and Student Academic Services use to confirm that you have fulfilled all of the requirements to graduate.
  - ii. You can also keep track of your progress through your degree by using a [tracking sheet that corresponds to your degree program](#).
- b. You're required to have a meeting with your SPS Advisor at least once every year, in the spring, to plan out your schedule for the following year. To that meeting you should bring your best guess at a schedule, taking into account the following variables:
  - i. How many credits per quarter do you want to take?
  - ii. How quickly do you need to finish (should you prioritize core or non-core courses)?
  - iii. What topics are you most interested in or seem most important for your vocation and call?
  - iv. What is required for your degree program?
  - v. What are your constraints in terms of scheduling and time?
- c. If things change during the year, your advisor is your first point of contact. If it's an emergency and you can't get a hold of your advisor quickly, contact the Associate Dean.

**9. I think I'm a candidate for an exception/exemption to a particular curricular requirement.**

**What should I do?**

- a. Talk it over with your advisor first.
- b. If your advisor agrees, email the Associate Dean for SPS. Most exceptions/exemptions to policies have to go before the Graduate Curriculum Committee. This committee meets twice/quarter. If your situation goes before them, you will need to write up a statement. The Associate Dean will provide specific instructions pertaining to your situation.

**10. Can I combine two degrees (e.g., M.Div. and MA-RIS)?**

- a. Yes. You just need to fulfill all of the requirements for both degrees. Classes can double count towards both. For example, if you took the THEO 6511: Gender and Christianity course for the MA-RIS degree, it would also count as an elective for the M.Div.

**11. Which interdisciplinary courses are best to take?**

- a. This depends on your interests and schedule.
- b. A list of approved interdisciplinary courses and their descriptions can be found in the Student Handbook. You may take an interdisciplinary course not listed here with your advisor's approval.
- c. The most up-to-date information about these courses is found in the annual Graduate Catalog and Time Schedule. Browse the courses in BUS, EDU, ORG, and MFT.

**12. I'm trying to register for an interdisciplinary course but I'm having trouble.**

- a. Some interdisciplinary courses are designed to allow SPS students to register via Banner with no additional approval. If you try to register via Banner and you receive an error message, email the Associate Dean and the ADGS will contact the Program Coordinator of the graduate program with the course information. The Program Coordinator of that graduate program is responsible for lifting the permissions. In these cases, the enrollment of SPS students is at the permission of the instructor and the other graduate

program. Once the Program Coordinator of the graduate program in question has lifted the permissions, the student should then be able to register via Banner.

**13. I'm interested in studying a topic that hasn't been offered as a course. What can I do?**

- a. Students can take up to six (6) credits of independent study for their degree. To take an independent study (offered for 1, 2, or 3 credits), develop the idea that you're interested in studying or the question you're interested in answering, and meet with the faculty member with whom you would like to work. If the faculty member agrees to supervise the independent study, fill out the [independent study registration form](#) and follow the instructions for submitting it.
- b. An independent study is sometimes done in preparation for a project or a thesis.
- c. Note: faculty are not compensated for independent studies. These are above and beyond their expected responsibilities, and they are under no obligation to agree to an independent study.

**14. I have a documented disability. How do I receive accommodations?**

- a. SPU offers [Disability Support Services](#) for all who need them. Their website has all the information about intake interviews and documentation. If you have questions, please contact them at [dss@spu.edu](mailto:dss@spu.edu). If you need further resources, contact the Associate Dean of SPS.

**15. This quarter has been really challenging, and I think I took on more than I can handle. What are my options?**

- a. Make an appointment to meet with your faculty advisor or the ADGS as soon as possible. Your advisor or ADGS will be needed to sign the forms mentioned below. Please do not try to work through this process without contacting some staff or faculty member at SPS. We are here to help.
- b. Depending on the time in the quarter, you may have several options if you want to take fewer courses. Any of these options may affect your financial aid, if applicable:
  - i. If it is very early in the quarter, you can withdraw from the course by dropping the course via Banner. Dates for add/drops, withdrawals, and the effect on your tuition/refunds are available on [the academic calendar](#).
  - ii. If it is early in the quarter, you might [withdraw from a course](#). A withdrawal can be for many reasons. Note that you cannot withdraw from a course after the seventh (7<sup>th</sup>) week of the quarter.
  - iii. If it is late in the quarter and you have completed almost all of the requirements for the course but a crisis occurs at the last minute, you can talk with your professor about [taking an incomplete](#). Incompletes are arranged between students and professors. They are for emergency situations only. Faculty then set a due date by which an incomplete must be submitted. [If a student does not submit the remaining work by the deadline, the incomplete grade \(an "I"\) becomes an "E" \(failing grade\)](#).
- c. If life is such that adjusting the course load of one class will not suffice, you have two options:
  - i. You can take a [leave of absence](#). This is usually the best option when you think that the situation will be or will hopefully be resolved within four quarter (a calendar year) and you will be able to return to SPS.
  - ii. You can [withdraw from SPS/SPU](#). This terminates your student record, showing that you do not intend to return to your education here. This is also the form you need to fill out if you're transferring to another institution.

- iii. Note that both of these options affect financial aid and loan repayment requirements.

**16. I have a problem/question and I don't know where to go to address it.**

- a. Is it about curriculum, classroom experiences, and advising? Contact the Associate Dean.
- b. Is it about community life or financial aid? Contact the Director of the Seminary.
- c. Is it a pastoral concern? Contact your faculty advisor, the Director of the Seminary, the Associate Dean, the Director of the CBTE, or the Dean of the SOT.
- d. I don't know which category it falls under! Contact the Associate Dean.