

Austin Graduate School of Theology: Quality Enhancement Plan

Executive Summary

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Austin Graduate School of Theology (AGST) is a seminary associated with churches of Christ. Its mission is “to promote knowledge, understanding, and practice of the Christian faith by equipping Christians and churches for service in the Kingdom of God.”

AGST’s Quality Enhancement Plan is the product of a three-year planning process which examined the school’s history, theological tradition, and mission. Data for the plan emerged from institutional research, faculty discussion, and student input. In keeping with the school’s history of practicing and teaching scholarship for the church, the QEP crystalized into a plan designed to improve students’ abilities to derive a word for the church from the text of scripture via exegesis.

After research, the QEP committee formulated the following goal for the QEP: “to increase the ability of students in our 2-year Master of Arts in Theological Studies program to derive a message from a biblical text via exegesis and then present that message to an audience of non-specialists in a sermon or other oral presentation.” Two Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) associated with this goal were also formulated:

- 1) Students will understand and implement the tools and processes necessary to develop an exegetical message from a biblical text.
- 2) Students will deliver this message clearly, coherently, and pastorally to an audience of non-specialists in a sermon or other oral presentation.

Four major action items are being implemented, each of which is designed to draw the programs of study closer to the mission of the institution.

- The faculty created a guide outlining the movement “From Text to Word” in a series of clear steps guiding students through the process of developing exegetical messages.
- The faculty revised the MATS curriculum to facilitate student achievement of the QEP’s goal
- The faculty modified the method of instructional delivery and assessment in the exegetically intensive and preaching courses.
- The Director of the Library will collaborate with the faculty in compiling a multimedia collection of sermons which will serve students as models for the work they are being prepared to do in the exegesis and preaching courses.

AGST adopted two grading rubrics to assess student achievement of the SLOs, one assessing (and informing) student exegesis of the text, and one assessing student presentation of an exegetical message. These will be administered to students a minimum of three times in courses throughout their degree program. Students will also receive two final assessments in the now-required second preaching “capstone” course.

The QEP presents Austin Grad with an opportunity to strengthen its premiere program of study and conform its practice more closely to the mission of the institution. Ultimately, the plan intends to equip students to engage scripture faithfully and to minister to churches in an ever-changing society.