

Discerning Graduate Education in Philosophy & Theology



1. What are my goals? Am I prepared to invest?

- Take time to pray and reflect over what you are looking for, and what your end goal is. Are you hoping to go into ministry, to go on for doctoral work, to bring a Catholic theological perspective into your professional career? What do you need to help you get there?
- A graduate degree requires a significant investment of time and resource, so it is important to discern well. Graduate study conveys the intent to go into research or enter a profession.
- With a degree in philosophy and/or theology, an entrepreneurial approach will help you establish a career from your education.
- In addition to traditional avenues, some of our graduates have gone into careers such as law, architecture, and non-profit management.

2. Do I feel called to this? What gifts do I bring?

- A theological education is more than a professional choice; it is a call to use your individual gifts for the greater good of the Church.
- In addition to a “state of life” vocation, each person has a personal calling based on the gifts and charisms God has given them as well as the experiences and sensitivities that they bring. As *Lumen Gentium* affirms, each human person is unique and unrepeatable.
- As you discern, it is important to ask yourself which courses you’ve excelled at in your undergraduate work. What do you get excited about? What are your real questions (the ones to which you don’t already have answers)?

DSPT may be a good fit for me if...

- I want a systematic education in philosophy and theology that is faithful to the tradition
- I want to go on for doctoral work
- I want a firm foundation in Catholic theology before going into ministry
- I want to incorporate a philosophical and/or theological education into my professional goals
- I want a community of dialogic partners seeking wisdom & Truth in our contemporary world

- As you reflect, you may find that you have questions that you can’t seem to put down – questions that need answers. This may be a sign of a call to study.

3. With whom am I in conversation, and with whom do I wish to be in conversation?

- Study in philosophy and theology involves a conversation that began 4,000 years ago and still continues. It is a conversation with the great philosophers, theologians, Church Fathers, and others through the centuries, as well as with the Church and your own community.
- Some academic programs are limited in what they offer – they only focus on the last 200 years, and in so doing, they miss a lot. At DSPT, we believe it is important to know the conversation from the beginning.

- It is your challenge to find your voice in this conversation, and to choose a community with whom to enter into dialogue.
- At DSPT, the emphasis is on teaching rather than research and the environment is non-competitive: the conversation is a communal endeavor since we see it as necessary to study and ask questions together.

4. Is the MA a terminal degree for me?

- If the MA is a terminal degree for you, it is important to know what your goals are.
- This is a good degree for lay students interested in ministry because it gives them a solid foundation from which to contribute significantly to any community. Typically, priests earn an MDiv, not an MA. The lay student with an MA in Theology can bring the academic background needed to complement what the priest has to offer.

5. If I am planning to pursue a doctorate, what reasons are there for choosing an MA first?

- An MA program can offer a greater breadth of experience compared to the PhD, which is immediately focused. An MA can be an excellent preparation for doctoral work.
- Study at DSPT is systematic in character, and can allow you time to sharpen your questions so you may know more fully what you want to study, and where you want to focus your doctoral dissertation.
- Earning an MA at a different institution than your PhD can help prevent you from letting your focus and methods become too narrow.
- Our students are well-prepared and successful in their doctoral programs.

6. What makes your programs unique? What kind of preparation do you most require?

- As a school grounded in the Dominican tradition, we understand the order of the learning to be important. Consequently, in philosophy, learning begins with the Ancients and moves forward, while in theology, it begins with Scripture and moves forward.
- We hold a conviction that we must be aware of contemporary ideas, but not limited by them. We aren't just interested in historical approaches but want our students to develop the capacity to think philosophically & theologically.
- The Dominican motto is to *convert by means of the Truth*. For this reason, we must address contemporary questions.
- At DSPT, we believe philosophy is essential to the study of theology, and must be studied for its own sake. Every prominent theologian has been philosophically sophisticated. To this end, we offer a unique Concurrent MA in both philosophy and theology.
- Albert the Great referred to his students as his *socii* – his associates or colleagues. He inspires our approach, in which students and faculty are meant to dialogue together.
- Our students self-select, and the majority who apply are accepted. However, all applications are reviewed by faculty who are experts in their fields. They are looking to see if the applicant will succeed in the program.
- The application requirements (i.e., the Statement of Purpose and Writing Sample) are intended to demonstrate the capacity of the student to succeed. Students who apply can trust the process and know that if they are accepted, they are equipped to succeed.

We would love to hear from you! admissions@dspt.edu or 888-450-3778



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