



QEP

IMPROVING THEOLOGICAL WRITING

Quality Enhancement Plan The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Executive Summary

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Southern) has developed a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) to improve theological writing among master's-level students. Through its ongoing institutional effectiveness and planning processes, Southern identified writing improvement as a critical area of student learning from the baccalaureate to the doctoral level. A broad-based leadership team of faculty, administrators, students, and alumni participated in focus groups and narrowed the QEP initiative to master's-level students, the largest student constituency at Southern. Southern's senior leadership and Trustees received periodic updates on the plan's development and solidified their commitment to improving master's-level theological writing by incorporating the QEP into the institution's five-year strategic plan.

Southern identified eight student learning outcomes related to theological writing. After reviewing the current literature and similar QEPs at peer institutions, Southern developed a plan to provide targeted writing improvement in its Systematic Theology curriculum, required of all graduate students, and to expand this improvement to other parts of the graduate curriculum over time. Rather than a traditional end-of-semester research paper, students complete two research based assignments during the semester, receiving specific feedback on all eight student learning outcomes in time to incorporate improvements into the second writing assignment. Student papers are scored using a faculty-developed writing rubric keyed to these eight learning outcomes. Results are assessed using multiple direct and indirect measures and assessment findings are used to improve the plan.

Southern created Internet-based writing instruction videos for each learning outcome, providing specific advice on each aspect of the writing process and making this instruction available to main campus and distance education students. Further, Southern engaged its faculty, teaching assistants, and staff in the seminary's Writing Center, Library, and Center for Student Success to helping students identify and resolve common writing needs and challenges.

For more information on Southern's QEP, Please contact Mr. Joseph Harrod, Director of Institutional Assessment (jharrod@sbts.edu).