

**AGST Alliance**

**MTh (Education)  
in Spiritual formation & Discipleship**

**Postgraduate Diploma  
in Education, Spiritual formation  
& Discipleship**

**Program Handbook**



**AGST**  
ALLIANCE

[www.agstalliance.org](http://www.agstalliance.org)

Welcome to your AGST Alliance program!

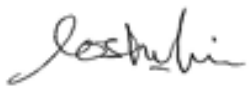
This handbook provides specific details of our **Master of Theology (Education) in Spiritual Formation and Discipleship** or **Postgraduate Diploma in Education, Spiritual Formation and Discipleship** program.

Please ensure you also read carefully the general guidelines, *Information for Students* – the information there complements what you read here.

In the Kingdom's ventures.



(Dr) Sooi Ling Tan  
AGST Alliance Dean



(Dr) Rosalind Lim-Tan  
AGST Alliance Education Programs Director

### Contact details

AGST Alliance Administration  
40, A-D, Mukim 17 Batu Ferringhi  
Penang 11100, Malaysia  
Email: [admin@agstalliance.com](mailto:admin@agstalliance.com)

Dr Tan Sooi Ling (Dean)  
Email: [dean@agstalliance.org](mailto:dean@agstalliance.org)  
Tel: +601-2521-7043

Dr Rosalind Tan (Education Programs Director)  
Email [edudirector@agstalliance.org](mailto:edudirector@agstalliance.org)

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*Introducing...*

## **Master of Theology (Education) in Spiritual Formation & Discipleship**

### **Postgraduate Diploma in Education, Spiritual Formation & Discipleship**

#### **Program objectives**

AGST Alliance's **MTh (Education) in Spiritual Formation and Discipleship** program, as a program in the field of practical theology, is designed to produce 'academically competent educational practitioners': that is, persons who are an enviable 'hybrid' demonstrating an appropriate level of academic ability with practical competence in areas of educational involvement.

Our MTh (Ed) and Postgrad Dip Ed are *theology* programs in *education*, so we work hard to integrate *theological* and *educational* elements into all the components of the program (rather than having separate theology and education modules).

This is to recognise that the program is not designed merely to 'give you a degree' but rather as a means of serving the Church by 'equipping the equippers of God's people in Asia.'

Those who wish to complete the coursework for the MTh (Education) program but not the thesis/major papers may be awarded a **Postgraduate Diploma in Education, Spiritual Formation and Discipleship**.

Our AGST Alliance programs are validated by the Asia theological Association (ATA). The ATA guidelines for the purpose and nature of Master of Theology programs are these:

Programs granting the Master of Theology degree are designed primarily to qualify graduates to function as seminary lecturers, principal leaders or ministers. As a graduate level program, it requires the student to develop research methods for analysing and evaluating issues. Normally, the attainment of analytic and evaluational skills will be demonstrated through the completion of a thesis. (*Manual for Accreditation*, ATA, 2010, p. 37).

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## Program components

To achieve the objectives of the MTh (Ed) program the following components are built in:

• Modules	
3 core modules @ 3 credits per module	9 credits
3 interest-specific modules @ 3 credits per module	9 credits
• Practicum	3 credits
• Thesis/educational project (Alternatively: 4 credits extra modules + 4 credits educational project)	8 credits
• Research skills workshop (spread over several modules)	1 credit
	_____
	TOTAL
	30 credits
	_____

*The learning hours for each module is in the range of 150-210 hours. The workload for one credit is estimated at 50-70 hours. This is an estimate of all the learning activity engaged in: e.g. pre-campus reading and preparation, on-campus sessions participation, post-campus reading and assignment preparation, etc. The relatively wide range of hours reflects the challenges for many of our students studying in English.*

### 1. Modules

Participants complete modules for 18 credits: three 3-credit core modules, and three interest-specific modules for a further nine credits.

Three-credit modules span about three to four months. Each module involves pre-campus preparation, a 5-7 day on-campus session, and post-campus assignment activities.

See the range of core and other module topics of the MTh(Ed) program.

### 2. Practicum

The practicum is a personalised guided field-activity, spanning 2-3 months duration, and with written/discussed analysis. It is designed to help you develop and/or sharpen skills needed by a competent educational facilitator in a Christian faith community setting.

You will be able to work in your own location for the practicum. An assigned mentor-coach guides you through the process, helping you intentionally evaluate and reflect theologically and educationally on the dynamics of the process.

Details of the practicum are available in a separate set of guidelines.

### **3. Research skills workshop**

Getting into study, especially as a mature-age student, can be daunting. To help you thrive in the program, and to prepare you for your thesis/educational project, there will be specific research and writing skills workshop activities. These are designed to help you review and/or develop the skills to do effective research and writing, and to use library and internet facilities well.

The workshop activities are usually appended to the on-campus sessions of several of the modules, although a specialised research methods module is also offered, and it is highly recommended that students go through this module to be better prepared for their thesis/educational project.

### **4. Thesis/educational project**

The thesis is designed to show that you are able to competently focus and integrate aspects of the program with your interests and planned vocation. It will demonstrate your ability to process course content and move beyond it.

[In lieu of the thesis, participants may opt to complete four extra credits of modules and then complete a four-credit educational project. This option should not be chosen by participants who plan to proceed with higher-level studies at a later date.]

Your thesis or educational project requires at least 6-8 months' work after you complete the modules. But you will not be alone – an assigned supervisor will journey with you through the process.

In line with the philosophy of the MTh (Ed) course, the thesis/project may take a variety of forms, tailored to participants' interests and planned vocation: it may include research, development of a curriculum, guided study of a relevant topic, etc.

Planning for the thesis/project is encouraged after you have a sense of the broad panorama of the program, so that later you can focus on a more specific area for your thesis research. The topic/scope of your thesis/project will be decided in consultation with the Education Programs Director. The length of the thesis is a maximum of 30,000 words; the educational project 15,000 words.

Details of the thesis/educational project are available in separate sets of guidelines.

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## Program practical details

The FAQs on our website cover many of the practical details of this program. We'll review the major ones here.

### 1. Module dates

See the dates of the modules on our AGST Alliance website.

### 2. Location of on-campus sessions

The on-campus sessions of the modules are usually conducted on campuses of AGST Alliance consortium member institutions.

The decision about which campus/location is used is determined by:

- The geographical spread of the module participants. More participants from one country may mean more modules taught on campuses in that country.
- The preference of the person facilitating the module (= the lecturer).
- The need to share module hosting.

Note: Participants need to budget for the cost of travel and living expenses for the on-campus sessions. Budget airlines help ease the travel costs. We will suggest possibilities for accommodation, but participants are responsible for making the specific arrangements.

### 3. Participation

The MTh(Ed)/Postgrad Dip Ed is a 'semi cohort program': While you may enter the program at any module, if you intend to complete the program you are advised to go through the modules consecutively. In this way, you will be with a core group of participants, and able to share your experiences and challenges with others who become friends and colleagues to network with after the program.

If you miss some of the on-campus sessions of a module for genuine reasons, you may be given some directed studies to take the place of the missed elements of the module. But if you miss all the on-campus sessions, you are unlikely to be allowed to complete the module. You will need to discuss this with the module facilitator in the first instance.

### 4. Probationary period and reviews

All participants enter the MTh(Ed) program on a two-module probationary basis: continuation is contingent on adequate attendance at the modules and satisfactory completion of the assessable work.

There will be another review after you complete the modules, to confirm that you may proceed with the thesis phase. If your module grades are not sufficiently high, you may be invited to complete the MTh(Ed) by means of four extra credits of modules and the 4-credit educational project.

### 5. Program duration and completion

*MTh(Ed)*: The maximum duration for completing the MTh(Ed) is five years. This allows participants time to take some electives of their choice and still have adequate time to complete their thesis/educational project.

**Postgrad Dip Ed:** The maximum duration for the Postgrad Dip Ed is three years from the date of the first module completed by a participant.

If MTh(Ed) participants complete the modules satisfactorily, but don't finish the thesis/project and practicum within the required time they will be awarded a Postgrad Dip Ed.

## 6. Time commitment

You need to ensure that you are able to give adequate time to the course. This means not just blocking out time to attend the 5-7 day on-campus sessions, but also to allocate significant time for pre- and post-campus study and assignment writing.

If you plan to attend the modules consecutively, this is equivalent to at least 50% of a typical full-time seminary program load.

Good time management is essential. You will need to restructure your work/ministry load and responsibilities for the duration of the program.

- Some participants have **study leave** provisions in their church/organisation.
- Others arrange to **cut down their work/ministry load**.
- Others take **unpaid leave**.

We urge you to use the *Student Support Framework Memorandum of Understanding* so that the major stakeholders in your program – your family, ministry organisation/seminary and/or local church leaders – are informed and committed to help you complete the program well.

## 7. Transfer to EdD

As they progress through the MTh(Ed), some participants realise they would like to move into the EdD program. This is possible.

**MTh(Ed) → EdD:** If you consistently produce coursework assignments at least at the Credit level, you may request to move into the EdD program. Your request will be considered by the Education Programs Committee, who will take into account the quality of your work, as well as whether we consider you fulfil the criteria for an EdD candidate, in terms of ministry experience and role. Your request to transfer in to the EdD program may come anytime before you complete the coursework.

If you later withdraw from the EdD, you will need to request permission to complete the requirements for an MTh(Ed) – otherwise you will be awarded a Postgrad Dip Ed.

Moving from the MTh(Ed) to either the EdD will involve additional program fees.

## 8. Interest-specific modules

You can choose your interest-specific modules from any of the AGST Alliance programs, i.e. Bible -Theology or Doctor of Ministry programs.

## 8. Finance matters

Details about fees and the payment schedule are found in *Information for Students* and on our website

Note that you will need to factor other significant costs into your program, beyond the program fees – for travel, accommodation, resources, etc. (See 'Other costs' in the Fees page on our website.)



We regret that no scholarship money is directly available from AGST Alliance. However, we actively support student applications to trusts/foundations for financial assistance.

### **9. Immigration and visa issues**

It is essential that you check carefully about immigration regulations *well in advance* of the on-campus sessions of modules being conducted in a country other than your own. *This is your responsibility.*

Usually, when you travel to another country from your own to attend the module on-campus sessions, a social visit pass is adequate. (You are officially attending a short training program.)

AGST Alliance is able to provide official letters if required for immigration purposes.

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## Expectations of MTh level study

What academic level is expected for the AGST Alliance MTh(Ed)?

Like all Master of Theology programs, this is a second theological degree (whether the first theological degree was a bachelors' or masters' degree), and so the academic expectations are naturally higher than for your first theological degree.

The MTh(Ed) is pitched at a level which reflects your ability to demonstrate these skills:

- Understand what is 'going on' in a topic, not just 'what happened' (= 'getting beneath the surface').
- Read, summarise and discuss quality texts and research which has been carried out up to a doctoral level.
- Critically evaluate alternative viewpoints, from the basis of an understanding of fundamental issues relating to the topic and the use of primary sources.
- Cope with contradictory and hostile interpretations.
- Formulate and express a defensible viewpoint on topics that have been researched.
- Make evaluative judgments with a high degree of confidence.
- Formulate questions of importance in a topic.
- Efficiently identify significant quality texts relating to the topic area and use them critically.
- Make full and efficient use of library facilities, as well as electronic and internet resources.
- Present written material in an appropriate format and following a recognised style guide.
- Write in a way in which points made can be logically defended.

*[Adapted from material by John Roxborough. <http://www.roxborough.com/Research/doctorates.htm>]*

If this seems to be a daunting list, don't despair! These are skills we will help you acquire and sharpen, as you bring diligence and discipline to the learning process.

Don't hesitate to seek help early to cope with the academic expectations!

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## Assessment and grading scale

Typically, six main areas are considered when work is assessed for higher education programs such as those offered in AGST Alliance's Master of Theology programs:

1. *Evidence of knowledge and understanding of the subject and/or texts*

To what extent does the assignment demonstrate breadth of knowledge, coverage of the topic, depth of understanding of issues, accuracy of information?

2. *Evidence of reading and use of other appropriate resources*

To what extent does the assignment show appropriate use of relevant, well-chosen and both classic and up-to-date literature and/or other source material, and an appropriate and accurate method of referencing?

3. *Quality of critical analysis and interpretation*

To what extent does the assignment demonstrate the ability to identify and analyse underlying issues, problems and questions and relate these to one another; to evaluate arguments and the evidence for them and examine their implications; to identify and to evaluate different perspectives?

4. *Quality of argument and structure (planning) of the assignment*

To what extent does the assignment answer the question in a clear and direct way; form a coherent argument; develop in a logical and convincing way, relating the introduction to the conclusion?

5. *Evidence of critical reflection, personal or ministerial application*

To what extent does the assignment demonstrate critical reflection on evaluation of personal and/or ministerial practice?

6. *Quality of communication skills and presentation*

To what extent does the assignment reflect appropriate standards and academic conventions in relation to the mode of presentation, including clarity of expression, spelling, grammar and syntax, referencing and bibliography?

*[These categories and following criteria have been adapted from R. Ackroyd and D. Major, Shaping the tools: Study Skills in Theology, London: Dartman, Longman & Todd, 1999.]*

Notice above the recurring phrase 'to what extent'. It is the extent to which the assessment criteria are demonstrated that determines the grade awarded. Thus, the grading scale for most of the components in our AGST Alliance MTh programs – with the assessment criteria for each of these six areas – is shown on the following page.

(The grading scale for the MTh(Ed) practicum is different.)

Grade	Criteria
High Distinction (HD)	<p>Excellent quality – indicating...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. excellent coverage of the topic; accurate in detail offering sophisticated, even original insights; excellent use of examples to demonstrate understanding; clear understanding of complex ideas and issues.</li> <li>2. extensively researched in breadth and/or depth and accurately referenced.</li> <li>3. imaginative, insightful, original, creative interpretations; impressive level of critical analysis and evaluation.</li> <li>4. a persuasive, authoritative coherent argument supported throughout by evidence, ability to show limitations of approaches; systematic and cogent structure.</li> <li>5. evidence of sophisticated, critical reflection and evaluation of personal and/or professional ministerial practice.</li> <li>6. written with flair and panache; fluent and confident; lucidly expressed and accurate in spelling and grammar.</li> </ol>
Distinction (D)	<p>Very good quality – indicating...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. high level of coverage of the topic; accurate in detail with some originality and innovative insights; good use of examples to demonstrate understanding; clear understanding of complex ideas and issues.</li> <li>2. widely researched in breadth and/or depth and accurately referenced.</li> <li>3. insightful and creative interpretations; high level of critical analysis and evaluation.</li> <li>4. a persuasive, coherent argument supported throughout by evidence, some ability to show limitations of approaches; systematic and cogent structure.</li> <li>5. evidence of a high level of critical reflection and evaluation of personal and/or professional ministerial practice.</li> <li>6. fluent and confident; lucidly expressed and accurate in spelling and grammar.</li> </ol>
Credit (C)	<p>Good quality – indicating...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. topic is covered in depth; detail is accurate throughout; independence of thought; good identification and understanding of complex ideas and issues.</li> <li>2. well researched and referenced.</li> <li>3. perceptive, thoughtful interpretations; good level of critical analysis and evaluation; systematic analysis of source material.</li> <li>4. presence of a cogent argument, supported throughout by evidence; the work is well structured.</li> <li>5. evidence of critical reflection, understanding and evaluation of personal and/or professional ministerial practice.</li> <li>6. lucidly expressed and accurate in spelling and grammar.</li> </ol>
Pass (P)	<p>Satisfactory quality – indicating...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. most relevant issues are covered with reasonable understanding; adequate knowledge is demonstrated; most central issues are identified.</li> <li>2. reasonable range of reading, sources not always explicit; not all referencing may be accurate.</li> <li>3. material from a variety of sources is drawn together in interesting ways; development of analysis may not be consistent, giving way to description.</li> <li>4. demonstrates the ability to construct an argument and present supporting evidence; links between introduction and conclusion are made.</li> <li>5. some attempt is made to reflect critically and evaluate; reference is made to personal and/or professional/ministerial practice.</li> <li>6. clearly written; there may be occasional errors in spelling and grammar.</li> </ol>
Borderline Pass (BP)	<p>Of doubtful quality for a pass, but there are just enough strengths to allow a pass grade to be awarded rather than Fail.</p>
Fail (F)	<p>Unsatisfactory quality – indicating...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ <i>Either</i> the work is unsatisfactory, deficient and/or insufficient in many respects, relating to both mastery of content and expression;</li> <li>♦ <i>Or</i> work is not submitted, is excessively late, or has been produced by cheating.</li> </ul>

Incomplete (I)	<i>[Distinguished from a Fail]</i> Work is not completed/submitted
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For the purposes of comparison, this grading scale may be compared with other frequently used grading scales. Note that these are comparisons are approximate:

<b>AGST Alliance Grade</b>	<b>Common descriptor</b>	<b>Percentage equivalent</b>	<b>Letter equivalent</b>	<b>Grade point equivalent</b>
High Distinction	Excellent	85% +	A	4.0
Distinction	Very good	75-84%	B+ / A-	3.6
Credit	Good	65-74%	B / B+	3.2
Pass	Satisfactory	50-64%	C+ / B-	2.6
Borderline pass	Marginal	40-50%	C- / C	2.0 - 2.3
Fail	Unsatisfactory	Below 50%	F	< 2.0

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