

TITLE: *Sharpening the Ax: Cutting-Edge Research and Writing*

INSTITUTION: Baptist Missionary Association Theological Seminary

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The focus of the BMATS Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is quality research and writing. The QEP begins with an overview of the seminary's institutional characteristics, mission, and goals, along with the institutional commitment to the QEP. The purpose of the Baptist Missionary Association Theological Seminary is *to provide accredited undergraduate and graduate theological education for equipping individuals for Christian service and leadership roles; to support the educational needs of the churches and agencies of the Baptist Missionary Association of America and other groups who share a like commitment to the authority of Scripture; and to serve as a resource center for critical thought and research in a context which nurtures the historical, doctrinal character of the churches of the Baptist Missionary Association of America.*

The process of deciding on and developing the QEP focus involved a review of institutional research, discussions across the campus community, and a survey of all constituent groups. The process revealed a concern about student research ability and writing skills. Student learning outcome are as follows.

1. The student will be able to appraise the quality and utility of research materials.
2. The student will be able to formulate a persuasive written argument grounded in research.
3. The student will be able to synthesize research literature identifying areas of agreement and disagreement among sources.
4. The student will apply the rules of English grammar and mechanics to written communication.

AAC&U Rubrics to measure each student learning outcome will be used to grade research papers. Faculty development workshops are scheduled to insure inter-rater reliability across the curriculum. Assessment will include grading student papers submitted as part of the application process, mid-program, and end-of-program papers. All papers will be graded according to the rubrics with improvement expected at each stage.

Support will be given to students in several ways. Library resources are essential in providing students with the necessary tools for research and writing. Student services include orientation, training, and tutoring. Through professional development, professors are empowered to give consistent feedback to students in courses across the curriculum.