



BTS is committed to making faithful theological education accessible to learners everywhere, equipping leaders for Christ's church. That is the BTS mission. But how effective are we? Our faculty and staff have been working very hard, but is that work being blessed?

## Educational Effectiveness

At BTS, we address questions of institutional effectiveness in two ways: qualitatively and quantitatively.

### 1. Qualitative Measurement

Personal testimony is the most important measure of our institutional effectiveness. Ultimately, each of us at BTS long for and look forward to the personal testimony that matters most—the ultimate judgment secured for us by the person and work of Jesus Christ and our union with Him through the Holy Spirit, the testimony of God the Father will proclaim on that final day, “Well done, my good and faithful servants.” We understand our work at BTS to be nothing short of our spiritual act of worship, offered in thanks for the glorious forgiveness and power that is ours as Jesus’ heirs. Until we receive that ultimate feedback, however, we rely on the testimonies of our brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers for encouragement, correction and wisdom.

Every student in every class is asked to rate the course, the professor and the impact BTS is having on their life, church and ministry. Additionally, we ask board members, alumni and other church leaders for their feedback.

### 1. Quantitative Measurement

We value the feedback of those in our community very highly, and we love to listen closely to learn ways we can grow and be of better service to the Christian church. But we don't just listen to people. We have also learned the value of listening to numbers.

Over the years, though our own experiences and industry curated “best practices” that we have adapted for the specific mission and calling of BTS, we have developed (and continue to refine) a numerical set of metrics that help us see what “the math” has to tell us about the ways God is blessing and leading us – calling us to deeper investment and faithfulness.

## **2.1 The Credit Hour**

At the core of our numerical system for evaluating our academic institutional effectiveness is the credit hour. A credit hour (generally speaking) is the amount of teaching time a professor would have if class met for one hour every week for a full semester (Fall or Spring). These hours can be spread out over the Fall or Spring term, condensed into one or two week “intensives” or recorded so that students can work through hours of instruction as their schedules permit.

But as anyone who has taken a graduate level course can testify, time with the professor is not all that is required for an academic credit hour. Far from it! Students are required to invest many hours reading, writing and reflecting on course material in preparation for and response to what they learn in class. Likewise, professors, sometimes assisted by external, expert graders, evaluate the learning outcomes achieved by each student grading class participation, objective exams, reading comprehension, writing effectiveness and additional, creatively designed projects.

As a general rule, students will be assigned 300-400 pages of reading and 10-12 pages of writing per credit hour of instruction. Since 102 credit hours of instruction are required for the Master of Divinity degree, therefore, a BTS MDiv graduate will generally have read over 35,000 pages of carefully curated reading assignments and written over 1,000 pages of original scholarship. This is no small task! Leadership in the Christian church is a high calling, and we take the preparation of leaders very seriously.

## **2.2 Program Requirements, Graduation and Ordination Rates**

BTS is no ordinary seminary! Built by established pastors to train future pastors and other church leaders, attending BTS is about so much more than simply earning a degree. We offer a wide range of certifications and degree tracks, but each BTS course is designed to edify students whether they complete a full program or not.

Traditional seminaries model their programs to meet the needs of full-time students, allowing part-time students to modify their schedules, taking classes “here and there” as time allows. BTS is different. Most of our students are already engaged in full-time ministry. Indeed, many of our students have already been ordained by their local churches to serve as deacons, elders and even pastors! Instead of asking students to adapt their circumstances to our course schedules, we do all we can to accommodate learners in extraordinary situations, offering classes in the evenings, on weekends, online, condensed into intensive weeks, in local churches and even behind prison bars.

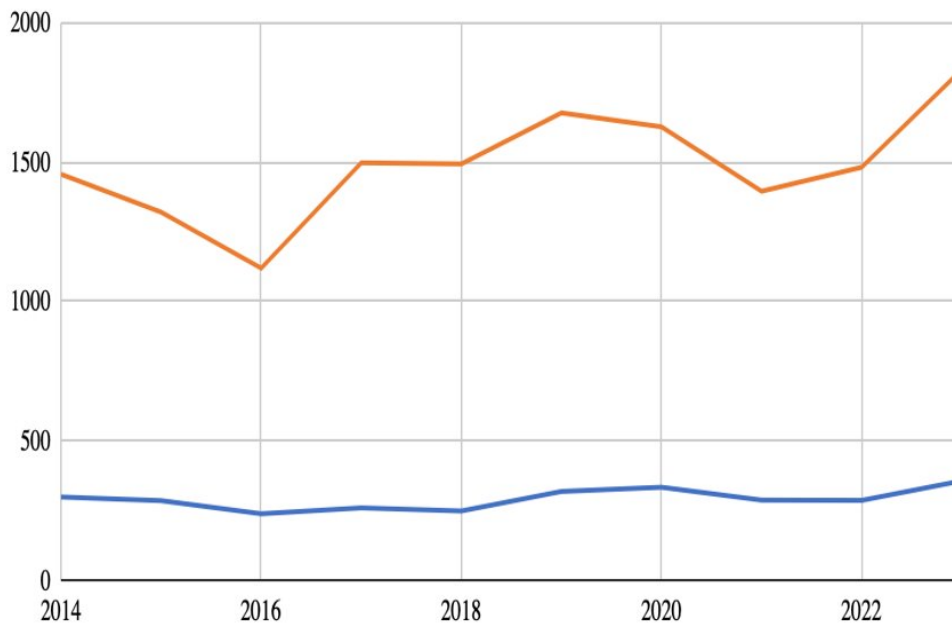
Between 2013 and 2023, BTS graduated 24 MDiv students. Of these students, 1 took 14 years while another took only 5. The average time to completion was just over 8 years. Completing the BTS MDiv degree program requires no small commitment!

But the good news is twofold:

1. **Our graduates do exceedingly well on ordination exams.** Of the 6 students who graduated in 2021, 2022 and 2023, for example, 5 are already ordained as of 10/2023 and the other is active in ministry while patiently and respectfully pursuing ordination in a less familiar East Asian church context.
2. **Most of our students have personal leadership and educational goals that do not require graduation from any specific degree program.** As of 2023, for example, only 11% of students who started in 2013 and 13% of students who started in 2014 had finished a degree program. It is the educational experience that our students value, not simply the piece of paper that comes at the end!

### 2.3 Student Numbers

One final way we “listen to numbers” at BTS is by keeping an eye on how many credit hours are earned over the course of a year. Since our mission is to make faithful theological education accessible to learners everywhere, equipping leaders for Christ’s church, we ought to ask ourselves how much education we have made effectively available. This returns us to our core numerical metric, the credit hour. How many credit hours are being earned because of our efforts? Is the number of credit hours earned trending upwards or downwards? If you understand the value of these questions, you will understand why this graph is so important to us:



The blue line represents the total number of students who took classes in each year, while the orange line represents the number of credit hours earned. Analyzing the lines allows us to see the impacts of such changes as the prison initiative (2016), the appointment of President Reeder (2018), the covid shutdown (2020) and the significantly increased generosity of several key donors since the pandemic.

We thank the Lord for His blessing and pray that it will continue (Ps. 90:17). If these observations have led to further questions or advice for us, we would love to hear them!