



Graduate Student Handbook

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*This version of the Graduate Student Handbook incorporates
all departmental actions through September 10, 2014.*

THE M.A. DEGREE

A. Purpose and Course of Study

The M.A. is the first academic degree in theology on the graduate level. As such, its primary purpose is to introduce students to the study of theology as an academic discipline. Such an introduction includes first of all training in the different methods used by scholars in the field. It also seeks to provide a basic exposure to the different branches of the theological enterprise, while permitting more specialized concentration in an area of particular interest.

As part of its attempt to provide a methodological and substantive overview of the field, the Fordham M.A. specifies a core of six courses to be taken by every student. This core comprises courses from across the department's areas of study, as follows:

THEO 5820 Introduction to the Old Testament
THEO 5890 Introduction to the New Testament
THEO 5300 History of Christianity I
THEO 5301 History of Christianity II
THEO 5620 Introduction to Systematic Theology
THEO 6700 Introduction to Theological Ethics[†]

[†] *Another course in moral theology may be substituted with departmental approval.*

Students who have previously taken one of these courses on the graduate level, and can provide appropriate documentation of its content, methods, and assessments, may petition to substitute another course in its place with the permission of their field of study coordinators.

The remainder of the M.A. program is ordinarily devoted to intensive work in one of the four fields of study of the department. This aspect of the program allows students to concentrate in an area of personal interest, and as such it provides an opportunity for them to determine whether further academic study in that area is appropriate. Students plan the specifics of this part of the program in consultation with their field of study coordinators. It should be noted that these elective courses are ordinarily doctoral seminars and thus have more rigorous requirements than core courses. In all, the M.A. program consists of twelve courses for students concentrating in Biblical Studies (to allow for the study of biblical languages) and ten courses for students concentrating in any other field of study. At the conclusion of each of the six core courses, every student sits for an exam which covers the core course material, assigned readings, and lecture materials.

B. Language Proficiency

Students in the M.A. program need to be able to use theological resources in either French or German. The ability to read theology in a foreign language is important for two reasons: it makes the student a member of a community of theologians that is broader than English-speaking North

Americans, and it enriches the theological imagination by offering access to different ways of speaking and hence of thinking.

Official Procedures:

1. Proficiency in either French or German is required for the M.A. degree.
2. The student should normally attempt to demonstrate this proficiency by the end of the second semester of course work, if not earlier.
 - 2.1. This proficiency is demonstrated by taking the appropriate language exams administered by the department.
 - 2.2. Further details can be found below under The Ph.D. Degree: Language Proficiency.

C. The M.A. Core Course Exams

The M.A. core course exams give students an opportunity to demonstrate their competence in each of the six core areas. The reading assignments and lectures will provide the basis for the exams. These exams will require knowledge of the distinctive methods and contributions of the various disciplines within theology. Students are encouraged to form study groups with members of their cohort in the class in preparation for these exams.

Official Procedures:

1. The Department of Theology requires a core course exam for each of the six core courses in the M.A. program.
 - 1.1. These exams are required for all students who began the M.A. program in or after the fall semester of 2013.
 - 1.2. The subject matter for the exams is the content of the six core courses required of all M.A. students (Old Testament, New Testament, History of Christianity I, History of Christianity II, Systematic Theology, Theological Ethics).
 - 1.3. The exam will take the form indicated by the core course instructor and will include a choice of essay questions.
 - 1.4. The exam takes place during the scheduled exam period.
 - 1.5. The exam is written by hand or on a computer terminal in one day, under supervision, in a two and a half hour session.

- 1.6. Normally books may not be used, with the possible exception of core courses in Biblical Studies. In these cases, Bibles may be supplied by the instructor.
2. Three grades are used for the core course exams: HP (“high pass”), P (“pass”), and F (“fail”). See procedures for grading below.
3. The core course letter grade (A, A-, B+, etc.) will be based in part on the core course exam. Students not pursuing the M.A. degree in theology will only be awarded a letter grade.
4. The written exams are stored in the department’s files for one year.
5. Candidates will be informed of the results of the exam no later than four weeks after the exam.
 - 5.1. A candidate passes the exam by achieving a grade of HP or P.
6. Each exam is graded by the faculty member who is teaching the core class.
 - 6.1. If the instructor assigns an F, two additional faculty members from the designated area read the exam. If both assign an HP or P, the student passes the exam. If one of the two assigns an F, the student fails the exam. If this is the first time the student has taken the exam, the student will be offered an opportunity to retake it during the following semester. If the student fails the exam twice, the transcript will record an F for the course, and the student will not receive the M.A.
 - 6.2. The faculty member who teaches the core course will communicate the final results of the exam to each candidate and to the department administrators.

D. The M.A. Final Project Requirement

The Department of Theology requires a final interdisciplinary paper and oral exam during the last semester of the student’s M.A. program.

Official Procedures:

1. No later than the beginning of the last semester of coursework, M.A. students will select a paper previously written for one of their courses to prepare as a final interdisciplinary paper.
2. The student will revise and further develop the content of the previously written paper in order to develop the interdisciplinary dimensions of this work in light of conversations conducted with faculty members in two fields of study other than the one in which the paper was originally prepared.

3. The student will select two faculty members in the alternate fields of study and will request the assistance of these faculty members. The student will make appointments with the faculty members, giving them sufficient time to review the essay, in order to discuss avenues for the development of the essay in light of the particular disciplines of the faculty members.
4. The revised paper will be submitted by the Friday of the twelfth week of the student's final semester to the three faculty members involved in the project.
5. In consultation with these three faculty members, the student will schedule a one hour time period during the last week of the semester for an oral exam on the paper. The oral exam will explore the interdisciplinary and integrative character of the work conducted.
6. The designated faculty members will assign the paper and oral exam a grade of HP, P, or F based on both the written and oral components.
 - 6.1. The student must receive two passing grades out of three to fulfill the M.A. requirement.
 - 6.2. If the essay and oral exam do not meet this standard, a request can be made by the student for a further revision of the document and a second oral exam in the subsequent semester. This request must be approved by the chair of the department. If the student does not pass this second exam, the student will not be awarded the degree.

THE PH.D. DEGREE

A. The Nature of the Degree

The doctoral degree is the sign of accredited membership in the scholarly community of the theological academy. Its attainment represents the judgment of the faculty, as representatives of that academy, that the recipient is qualified to perform the essential functions and duties of a professional theologian.

As a university degree, the doctorate of philosophy signifies orientation to the ideals of the university as a community of learning. Not all graduates will eventually function in a university setting; but all are formed by a university environment, and are expected to be committed to what the university stands for: not for simply passing on a body of knowledge, but for the advancement of learning through personal and communal enterprises.

A doctor, as the word's Latin root indicates, is first of all a teacher. Of course, no amount of education guarantees the ability to fulfill Dewey's admonition to "teach the student, not the subject." A successful teacher at any level must be much more than the possessor of a graduate degree. The doctorate should indicate, however, that a person is competent, from the point of view of knowledge and scholarship, to be a professor: not merely a communicator of knowledge, but a guide for others, including both undergraduate and graduate students. This means not only that one has sufficient mastery of essential information, questions, and perspectives in the field, but also that one knows how the advance of knowledge takes place: that is, that one is proficient in the methods of theological inquiry. It also implies that one has sufficient general education and mastery of the skills of communication (especially writing) to be able to advance others' education through dialogue and evaluation.

The doctorate also implies a commitment to the advancement of learning through scholarship. University professors are expected to conduct research, present their findings in academic fora, and publish their results. Publication is the means of sharing the results of one's labors, submitting them to peer evaluation and criticism, and promoting scholarly progress. The doctorate thus implies not only a broad knowledge of the field and its methods, but also a degree of specialization that allows one to make a particular contribution. While not all teachers of theology will be under the imperative to "publish or perish," the requirement of a written dissertation for the doctoral degree signifies the ability to engage in this dimension of scholarly life.

Scholars are also expected to contribute to the life of the field in other ways: for example, by service to the institutions that preserve and communicate knowledge. This service will take many different forms: participation in conferences and dialogues, administration of schools and departments, organization of programs, working on committees, etc. All of these should not be seen primarily as unfortunate duties that come along with an academic appointment (although in honesty it must be said that they often become exactly this), but should ideally be a part of the

larger collaboration in scholarship that typifies those who have responsibility not only for their own work, but for the profession itself.

The Ph.D. program should be looked at in the light of the nature of the degree. It presents a series of steps that are intended not as extrinsic requirements—a sort of “dues” that must be paid for a union card—but as a progressive engagement in the life functions of a theological scholar. At this stage, the student is invited increasingly to take charge of his/her education: to determine the direction of study, to begin to specialize in the field, to dialogue with and demonstrate his/her competence to representatives of the academy. Doctoral study is designed for the preparation of scholars: not simply competent teachers of theology, but ones who can also communicate with and make a contribution to the community of theologians. Hence the program aims not only at the attainment of deeper and more extensive knowledge within one of the department’s “fields of study” (i.e., Biblical Studies, Christianity in Antiquity, Historical Theology/History of Christianity, and Systematic Theology), but also at the formation of the *habitus* of a scholar who can ask independent questions, research unexplored areas, suggest novel syntheses, and make new connections. As a doctoral student, the student is a new member of the department, collaborating with faculty in the theological enterprise while laying the foundations for a particular contribution.

Upon entering the Ph.D. program, a student will be assigned an advisor working in the student’s intended field of study. This advisor will assist in the selection of courses, monitor the progress of language acquisition, and fill all additional roles necessary for good progress. By the conclusion of the first year of coursework, students may choose another member of the department to fulfill this role. All advisors are expected to keep track of the progress of their advisees and submit year-end summaries of progress to the chair. Students certainly may, but are not required to, ask their advisor to serve as the mentor for the dissertation. Some students, through graduate assistantships, will have the opportunity to work closely with individual members of the faculty in some of the everyday tasks of the academy. All students are invited not only to seek advice on their studies, but even more to get to know additional faculty members on a personal and informal basis and to engage with them in theological discussion.

B. Coursework

With the consultation of an advisor, students will take responsibility for planning a curriculum of study that is both broad and specialized. Coursework at the doctoral level, even outside of seminars, demands a more active role on the part of the student: rather than simply absorbing information, the student is expected to contribute to the encounter with texts and ideas, to design projects, and to pursue independent study.

Official Procedures:

1. Students are required to take 12 courses to fulfill the requirement for doctoral coursework. Additional ancient language courses may be required for students in appropriate fields of study. Individual fields of study will have specific regulations concerning specific courses within the field as well as general rules about the number of

courses to be taken within the field. Ordinarily, these courses will be completed during the first four semesters (including, possibly, the summer between the second and third semester) of doctoral study.

- 1.1. Because it is often beneficial for students to be able to teach in a related but distinct field from their primary field of study, students should consult with their advisors to select one or more courses in a field of study other than their primary one. Ordinarily, students would select this second field for the “Other Field of Study” exam of the Ph.D. Comprehensive Exams.
 - 1.2. Each student is required to take at least one of the department’s courses that emphasize method.
 - 1.3. Students in Systematic Theology must fulfill that field of study’s distribution requirement. By the completion of their studies (master’s and doctoral), the student must have taken at least one course in each of the following areas: fundamental theology, theology of God, Christology, theological anthropology, ecclesiology, sacramental theology, and moral theology. (If a student has taken an approved course in one of these areas during master’s studies, it need not be repeated during doctoral studies.)
2. In addition to the specific requirements within the field of study, students must complete a zero credit course, *Teaching Theology*, before they are permitted to teach courses for the department. The department will offer this course at least once every four semesters.

C. Language Proficiency

In the course of doctoral studies, all students will be called upon to demonstrate reading proficiency in two modern languages and will be expected to use these linguistic skills in reading for classes and papers. Unless otherwise specified, the two required modern languages are French and German. For some students, a similar knowledge of ancient languages will need to be demonstrated. (On both these points, see specific regulations below.) As a member of the theological academy, students belong to the international scholarly community and must be able to enter into its theological conversations. In addition, a student’s research should be at a level of depth where the ability engage with significant sources in their original languages will make a difference.

Official Procedures:

1. Proficiency in one modern language is normally required by the conclusion of the first semester of coursework. Students who have obtained their language skills at other institutions must complete the department’s exam. Students who have received their M.A. in Theology from Fordham (and have already passed one of the department’s language exams) are not required to take the same exam a second time.

2. Proficiency in the second modern language should be demonstrated by the conclusion of the third semester of coursework, if not earlier.
3. Students must have successfully demonstrated proficiency in all required languages before sitting for their comprehensive exams.
4. Proficiency is demonstrated by taking the appropriate language exam administered by the department.
 - 4.1. Departmental language exams (both modern and ancient) will be drawn up by members of the department. Each exam will include a text that the student is asked to translate with a dictionary with a fair measure of accuracy in the time permitted. The exam may also include questions of comprehension about the text.
 - 4.2. In advance of the exam date, students register to take a language exam in the Theology office.
 - 4.3. Language exams will be administered at least once each semester.
 - 4.4. The grade for the language exam is Pass or Fail.
 - 4.5. A failing exam is not registered on the permanent record. If the student fails, he or she takes the exam in the following semester.
5. Students in Systematic Theology may substitute Spanish for French or German.
6. Students in Historical Theology/History of Christianity who intend to write a dissertation in a pre-modern period for which Latin and/or Greek is necessary must demonstrate proficiency in the relevant language(s). Proficiency is demonstrated by the successful completion of the relevant exam(s).
7. Students in Biblical Studies must demonstrate proficiency in Hebrew and Greek through departmental exams and proficiency in Aramaic through a course or tutorial.
8. Students in Christianity in Antiquity must demonstrate proficiency in Greek and Latin through departmental exams. In addition to these requirements, students are strongly encouraged to develop language competencies relevant to other areas of interest (e.g., Coptic, Syriac).

D. The Ph.D. Comprehensive Exams

The Ph.D. comprehensive exams represent a significant step beyond course work and before the dissertation. They are not intended to test specific knowledge gained in particular courses, but to demonstrate that the student has a sufficient understanding of the field. The student is required to choose two general areas of research within his or her primary field of study and one area in a

related field of study, which will constitute the “Other Field of Study” exam. The fourth exam will be more narrowly focused and should reflect the student’s intended area of dissertation research.

The exams should provide the student with an opportunity to achieve the following goals: (1) work toward a personal synthesis of theological studies; (2) demonstrate mastery of the methods of a theological discipline; (3) foster reflection on the relation of a student’s area of specialization to the whole of theology; (4) demonstrate capacity for planning research, writing, and critical thought.

Since each exam is answered in one three-hour sitting, the student should be prepared to present an essay that shows not a cascade of facts but a carefully reasoned view of the topic. “Information” should be presented in the context of a developing argument; the purpose is to see not how much detail the student can retain, but how well the student can present an informed and logically structured argument on the topic.

Ordinarily, a student will take the exams during the sixth semester. University policy requires that no more than three semesters elapse between the completion of coursework and the comprehensive exams.

Official Procedures:

1. The Department of Theology requires a set of comprehensive exams for the doctoral degree.
2. Ordinarily, comprehensive exams should be taken in the sixth semester. However, the department will also offer the exam a total of two times per year, for those students who have gained approval for an alternate date.
3. In consultation with his/her advisor, the student proposes all four topics for his/her exams: two “Primary Field of Study” exams (Area of Research I, Area of Research II), one from a related field of study (designated the “Other Field of Study” exam, and normally drawn from one of the other fields of study offered by the department, subject to the rules below), and a dissertation area of research.
 - 3.1. Ordinarily, a student submits his or her petition for exams to the doctoral committee during the student’s fourth semester.
 - 3.2. Each field of study has developed standard bibliographies of primary and secondary sources for the various areas of research in the field. These bibliographies form the basis for the comprehensive exams. They are available electronically through the departmental office. On a regular basis, the faculty in the fields of study should consider revisions to these bibliographies so as to keep them current with developments in the field. Ideally, mastery of (or engagement with) this bibliography is intended to demonstrate the student’s capacity to offer an introductory-level course in the field.

- 3.3. The student submits a proposal to the doctoral committee that identifies the areas of research for the two “Primary Field of Study” exams as well as the “Other Field of Study” exam. These three exams are simply designated by area (e.g., “Medieval” for Historical Theology/History of Christianity, “Christology” for Systematic Theology). The doctoral committee then assigns a member of the faculty to work with the student in preparation for each of these exams.
- 3.4. Once the student is assigned to members of the faculty for each of the “Primary Field of Study” exams and the “Other Field of Study” exam, the student works with each respective faculty member to add another approximate 30% of entries to the standard bibliography for each exam. This additional bibliography may reflect the student’s particular interests in the area, but the student remains responsible for demonstrating a sufficient understanding of the area or period in general.
4. The fourth topic should reflect an area of specialized research related to the student’s intended dissertation topic.
 - 4.1. The student is to submit this area of research and a preliminary bibliography (normally 10-15 items) to the doctoral committee for approval. The student also proposes to the doctoral committee for approval the faculty person he or she wishes to supervise the exam. The selection of the faculty member for the exam does not necessitate that the student and faculty member will work together on the eventual dissertation, although such continuity is recognized as useful.
 - 4.2. Once the student is assigned to a member of the faculty for the dissertation area exam, the two work together to build a sufficient bibliography (ordinarily comparable in length to the field-specific comprehensive exams). This bibliography should not only include the necessary sources (both primary and secondary), but also indicate that the student possesses the requisite methodological skills to pursue the question at hand.
5. The examination as a whole comprises two parts: written and oral.
 - 5.1. For each written essay, the student is ordinarily provided two questions and asked to answer one of them. However, the individual examiners may ask the student to answer more than one question, understanding that the time allotted per exam remains three hours.
 - 5.2. The student may answer the questions by writing them by hand or by using a computer that does not have internet access or another way to access usable information.

- 5.3. Normally, books may not be used. In some cases, however, (e.g., an exam in Biblical Studies or Christianity in Antiquity) a specific book, such as the Bible, may be provided to the student.
- 5.4. All four three-hour exams are to take place under supervision over a two day period. At the discretion of the associate chair for graduate studies, there may be one or two days between the first and second written exam dates.
- 5.5. The second (oral) part of the examination is held within 15 class days after the first part is finished, and lasts 90 minutes. Normally, each member of the board questions the student for about 15 minutes on their respective exam. Following this initial 15 minutes, any member of the board may ask the student about that specific exam for the 5-7 minutes remaining, before the process moves on to the next question.

Procedures for the Ph.D. Comprehensive Board and Evaluation of Exams

1. Each Ph.D. Comprehensive Board comprises four members, three from the student's primary field of study and one from the student's other field of study.
 - 1.1. The members of the Ph.D. Comprehensive Board prepare the written exams, participate in the oral component, and grade the entire examination (both written and oral).
 - 1.2. The associate chair for graduate studies solicits questions from the members of the board and administers the written exams.
 - 1.3. The examiner for the "Other Field of Study" exam schedules and chairs the oral component of the examination, and submits the final grade to the chair of the department.
 - 1.4. Each member of the Ph.D. Comprehensive Board reads each of the four essays.
2. After the oral component of the examination, each member of the Ph.D. Comprehensive Board assigns, on a standard form and in writing, a grade for the whole examination (all four parts, both written and oral).
 - 2.1. Three grades are possible: HP (High pass, ordinarily reserved for the top 10%), P (Pass), and F (Fail).
 - 2.2. A student who receives the grade of HP or P from at least three of the four examiners passes the examination. A candidate who receives a grade of F from two or more of the examiners fails the examination.
 - 2.3. If at least three of the four examiners assign a "HP" the candidate receives a HP for the entire examination. Otherwise, the candidate receives a grade of P.

3. The written exams are stored in the department's files for at least one year.

Additional Procedures for Students

1. The student must have passed all language requirements prior to taking comprehensive exams.
2. Ordinarily, the student will take the exams during his or her sixth semester, approximately ten months after the completion of coursework.
 - 2.1. Students who defer taking their exams at this time, or who wish to postpone an exam already scheduled, need the written consent of the chair in order to take the exams on an alternate timetable. Students should also be aware that a delay of exams can jeopardize funding.
 - 2.2. Ordinarily, an application to take the exams should be submitted to the chair of the Doctoral Committee during the student's fourth semester, while the student finishes his or her coursework. Applications shall state how and when the language requirements have been or will be fulfilled; specify the date on which the exams will take place; and list the four areas that the student proposes.
3. Soon after the applications are submitted, the chair of the Doctoral Committee will inform applicants if their proposed exams have been approved. If approved, the Doctoral Committee will inform the student of the names of the faculty members who have been assigned to each exam.
4. In consultation with the members of the Ph.D. Comprehensive board, the student augments the standard bibliographies for the two "Primary Field of Study" exams and the "Other Field of Study" exam and works closely with the examiner for the dissertation area exam to build a bibliography.
5. Candidates may, in writing, withdraw their application to take the examination without penalty (excepting the concerns identified in point 2.1 above) at any time up to the week before the first written exam. They may not withdraw after the exams have begun.
6. Candidates will be informed of their official grade within three school days of the oral component by the chair of the department.
7. Candidates who fail the examination as a whole may be permitted to retake it (albeit with different questions) in the following semester or later if the chair of the department recommends and the dean approves.
 - 7.1. Candidates who are permitted to take the examination for the second time must repeat the entire examination.

- 7.2. Candidates who take the examination for the second time must pay the fee listed in the schedule of fees in the Bulletin of the Graduate School.
- 7.3. Candidates who fail the examination twice may not take it a third time.

Appendix 1: Comprehensive Exams in Systematic Theology

1. Within the “Primary Field of Study” exams, the first area of research that all students in Systematic Theology will propose is an overview of twentieth- and twenty-first century theology. A bibliography of “Paradigmatic Works” is available as the basis for this question.
2. Within the “Primary Field of Study” exams, the second area of research that each student will propose is one of the areas of the distribution requirement in Systematic Theology. At the current time, these areas are: fundamental theology, theology of God, Christology, theological anthropology, ecclesiology, sacramental theology, and moral theology.
3. A student specializing in another field who chooses Systematic Theology as the “Other Field of Study” for the Ph.D. comprehensive exam will select to be examined either in “Paradigmatic Works” or in one of the areas of the distribution requirement (see above, point 2).

Appendix 2: Comprehensive Exams in Historical Theology/History of Christianity

At the current time, the faculty in Historical Theology/History of Christianity define the possible areas of research in which a student may select a “Primary Field of Study” or “Other Field of Study” exam as follows: Early Christianity, Medieval Christianity, and Modern Christianity. Each area of research has its own bibliography selected by the faculty.

1. A student whose field of study is Historical Theology/History of Christianity will select two of these areas of research for his or her “Primary Field of Study” exams.
2. A student from another field of study who selects Historical Theology/History of Christianity for his or her “Other Field of Study” exam will select one of these areas of research.

Appendix 3: Comprehensive Exams in Biblical Studies

1. A student whose field of study is Biblical Studies will take his or her two “Primary Field of Study” exams in Hebrew Bible/Old Testament and New Testament. The dissertation area exam will focus on the testament in which the student is concentrating.
2. A student from another field of study who selects Biblical Studies for his or her “Other Field of Study” exam will specify either the exam in Hebrew Bible/Old Testament or the exam in New Testament.

Appendix 4: Comprehensive Exams in Christianity in Antiquity

At the current time, the faculty in Christianity in Antiquity define the possible areas of research in which a student may select a “Primary Field of Study” or “Other Field of Study” exam as follows: New Testament, Ante-Nicene Christianity, Patristics, Second Temple Judaism, Greco-Roman World. Each area of research has its own bibliography selected by the faculty. (Note that the New Testament and Patristics bibliographies are identical, respectively, to those used in Biblical Studies and in the Early Christianity exam in Historical Theology/History of Christianity.)

1. A student whose field of study is Christianity in Antiquity will select two of these areas of research for his or her “Primary Field of Study” exams.
2. A student whose field of study is Christianity in Antiquity may not select the New Testament exam in Biblical Studies or the Patristic exam in Historical Theology/History of Christianity as his or her “Other Field of Study” exam.
3. A student whose field of study is Christianity in Antiquity must select one “Primary Field of Study” exam from among the three directly related to the Christian theological tradition. Selecting both Second Temple Judaism and Greco-Roman World as the two “Primary Field of Study” exams is not permitted.
4. Students from any field of study who select Second Temple Judaism as one of their comprehensive exams must have demonstrable competence with Hebrew.

E. Dissertation

A doctoral dissertation is the literary exposition of a thesis. The thesis is the theological proposition for which one marshals evidence and arguments. Ideally, one should be able to formulate the thesis in a declarative sentence: “My thesis is that....”

The writing of the dissertation is at the same time the last part of one’s formal education and one’s first major work of independent scholarship. It is meant to train the student in the skills needed to be a competent and productive member of the academic community, and to develop expertise in some limited area. The finished product is meant to demonstrate a number of things: that one can do scholarly research; that one has the ability to ask significant questions; that one has something original to contribute; that one can communicate intelligibly and in accepted academic form; that one can perform a task within an allotted time framework; that one has competence in one’s field, and is familiar with the relevant literature; that one can defend a position against objections that may be raised; and that one knows and can use appropriate theological methods.

A thesis is not simply a test of competence, but is also meant to be a contribution to the field one is entering. It should add something new to scholarship—e.g., the uncovering of new data; or a new interpretation or theory or synthesis regarding data already at hand; or a new evaluation or

judgment of data or theories or their results; or the proposal of a new method or course of action to be followed.

The subject matter of a theology dissertation may serve any of Tracy's three "publics" of theology: the academy (foundational theologies), the church (systematic theologies), or society at large (practical theologies). But by its form, the dissertation is always addressed to the academy; it is a work of scholarship.

Although scholarship may be focused in different ways in the various field specializations, every thesis will include some degree of research, at least into the state of a question; and every thesis will include some degree of argument and judgment, at least regarding the theological relevance of one's data.

The dissertation must be methodologically self-conscious. It must justify its method and structure and continually demonstrate their presence.

Official Procedures:

Doctoral Dissertation Proposal

The dissertation proposal presents the student's plan for a major research project, in fulfillment of the last essential requirement for the degree. The proposal should contain the following components:

1. A brief statement of the problem to be studied and the background or antecedents of the issue which lead the candidate to propose a study of this particular area.
2. A statement of the thesis.
3. A description of the method(s) to be used, and of the logical order in which the research is expected to unfold.
4. An outline of the contents of the dissertation in chapter form or other sequential units.
5. The specific contribution that this study is expected to make to the field of theology.
6. Testimony to the originality of the precise research thesis being proposed.

Proposal Development and Acceptance

1. The student selects a member of the department in the area of the student's interest to be the mentor of the dissertation. In consultation with the mentor, the student selects two readers in related fields. Alternatively (and when appropriate to the project), a co-mentor and 1-2 readers may also be selected. The mentor has primary responsibility for the direction of the dissertation according to the needs of the project.

- 1.1. Students who are applying for a reader or co-mentor from outside the department or the university should submit a letter to the Doctoral Committee explaining why an external committee member is wanted.
- 1.2. Students who are applying for an external committee member are ordinarily advised to submit their letter to the Doctoral Committee at least one meeting before the dissertation proposal is submitted. In the case of a proposed committee member from outside the university, a full c.v. is required.
2. The student meets with the mentor and the two readers to discuss the student's idea and to begin shaping the proposal.
3. The student continues to shape the proposal until the mentor and two readers approve it. The student submits the proposal, signed by the mentor and the two readers, to the department. The proposal must be in the departmental office at least three weeks before the stated meeting of the Doctoral Committee at which the student wants the proposal to be considered. The student submits the Approval of Dissertation Proposal Form [ed.: not the older "Approval of Dissertation Form"] along with the proposal.
4. At the same time, the student distributes paper copies of the proposal and working bibliography to the members of the Doctoral Committee and sends an electronic copy to the departmental administrator for distribution to the full faculty. The faculty are strongly encouraged to communicate commendations, suggestions, or reservations about any part of a proposal to members of the Doctoral Committee. These responses are preferably written, but may be communicated orally.
5. The Doctoral Committee meets at least once each semester to consider and act on all the proposals submitted. Proposals cannot be considered outside the regularly scheduled meetings of the Doctoral Committee.
 - 5.1. The Doctoral Committee may act on a dissertation proposal in one of four ways: 1) accept without change; 2) provisionally accept, with revisions to be carried out under the supervision of the mentor; 3) send back for specified revision, with the proposal resubmitted to the Doctoral Committee; or 4) reject the proposal entirely.
 - 5.2. Subsequent changes in the committee and significant changes in the proposal must be approved by the Doctoral Committee.

Style

1. Ordinarily, the proposal and the written dissertation follow the usage prescribed by the *Chicago Manual of Style*. The main points of this usage are found in the current edition of Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*.

2. Dissertations in Biblical Studies as well as dissertations that cite the Bible and related ancient sources should follow the style sheet of the Society of Biblical Literature, as needed.

Preparing for the Dissertation Defense

The purpose of the dissertation defense is twofold. First, the defense gives the student the opportunity to justify the written thesis: its presuppositions, methodology, use of sources, argumentation, and conclusions. Second, the defense is an opportunity for the student to explain the context and significance of the thesis--that is, to show how the thesis relates to other aspects of theology, to different views, and wider perspectives.

1. The mentor and two readers sign a form indicating their judgment that the written thesis is ready for defense.
2. The department chair appoints two additional faculty examiners.
 - 2.1. At least three weeks before the scheduled defense, copies of the finished thesis are given to the examiners.
 - 2.2. Substantive reservations on the part of an examiner about any aspect of the written dissertation should be communicated to the mentor in advance of the defense.

The Dissertation Defense

1. The mentor conducts the defense.
2. Ordinarily the defense lasts from ninety to one hundred twenty minutes.
 - 2.1. The mentor invites the candidate to lead off with a short presentation. This should include a succinct statement of the thesis and its conclusions as well as any matters of interest not in the written text of the dissertation—e.g., surprises encountered during the research, dead-ends, new insights, and/or the contribution of this thesis to the field of theology.
 - 2.2. The mentor then examines the student.
 - 2.3. The mentor calls upon each of the readers to examine the student.
 - 2.4. The mentor invites the examiners to question the student. As faculty outside the process of writing and correcting this particular dissertation, the examiners focus more on the relation of the thesis to the broader areas of theology that they represent. Questions about the content of the thesis are also in order.
 - 2.5. Follow-up questions from the mentor, readers, or examiners may be permitted.

3. When the conversation is concluded, the candidate is invited to leave the room.
4. The mentor leads a discussion about the merits of the written dissertation and the candidate's oral performance in defense of it.
5. Subsequent to this discussion, the mentor passes out the voting cards printed by GSAS. Two written votes are then taken. The first vote is cast by the mentor and the two readers concerning the quality and scholarly validity of the written dissertation.
 - 5.1. A unanimous vote (three) is required to pass.
 - 5.2. The first vote must be counted and announced before the second is taken.
 - 5.3. The second vote is cast by the mentor, readers, and examiners concerning the quality and scholarly validity of the oral defense.
 - 5.4. A total of four out of five votes in favor of the candidate is required to pass.
 - 5.5. Both the first and second votes must be pass in order for the defense to be passed.

Subsequent Actions

1. The mentor informs the candidate of the results of the vote.
2. The mentor informs the department chair of the outcome.
3. A candidate who passes makes any corrections that may be required. The candidate then presents copies of the finished thesis to the Office of the Graduate Dean and completes the paperwork, according to the norms of the university.
4. A candidate who does not pass may repeat the defense one time only.
 - 4.1. Preparation for the repeat defense may include doing further research to clarify ideas or deepen understanding, reading more widely in the field, and/ or rewriting sections of the dissertation to strengthen the thesis or correct errors.
 - 4.2. According to the norms of the University, a candidate who does not pass the second defense is released from the doctoral program without a degree.