

Southern Methodist University

Dedman College

POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND REQUIREMENTS

of the

Graduate Program in Religious Studies

Revised June 2007

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Goals, Areas, Fields, and Subfields of Study

Goals: The Graduate Program in Religious Studies comprises programs of advanced teaching and scholarship leading to the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in religious studies. The goals of the M.A. and Ph.D. degree programs are to prepare persons for academic leadership in the field, and hence for professional careers as teacher-scholars in schools, colleges, universities, and schools of theology, as well as—in the case of the M.A. degree program—to accommodate the qualified nonprofessional student interested in advanced work in religious studies within the context of the liberal arts and sciences.

Areas: In both the M.A. and the Ph.D. programs, the studies included at the *qualifying level* are divided into four areas: (1) Historical Study of Religion: Western Traditions; (2) Historical Study of Religion: Eastern Traditions; (3) Philosophical Study of Religion; (4) Scientific Study of Religion. Each of these areas is represented by one of the constituent seminars of the Core Seminar in Religious Studies that is required of all entering students, whether in the M.A. or in the Ph.D. program.

Fields: In the Ph.D. program, specialization at the *field level* is limited to six fields of study, as follows:

1. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament
2. New Testament
3. The Christian Tradition
4. Systematic Theology
5. Religious Ethics [Christian Ethics]
6. Religion and Culture

Field Examinations: The six fields of specialization require field examinations as follows:

Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

1. Torah and Former Prophets: Literature, Historical Context, Critical Theory
2. Latter Prophets and Writings: Literature, Historical Context, Critical Theory
3. Special Area (selected materials from the Hebrew Bible, chosen in view of the student's anticipated dissertation, and including detailed exegesis of specified passages)
4. Either (a) New Testament or (b) Hellenistic Judaism

New Testament

1. Background of the New Testament: The Greco-Roman Milieu and Hellenistic Judaism
2. Contemporary Methods of Interpretation
3. History of the Interpretation of the New Testament: Introductory and Classical Issues
4. Elective (chosen in view of the student's anticipated dissertation)

The Christian Tradition

1. Survey of the History of Christian Doctrine
2. Another Survey (e.g., History of Christian Ethics, Institutions, Liturgy, Art, etc.)
3. A Period in Ecclesiastical History
4. The Corresponding Period in Intellectual and Cultural History

Systematic Theology

1. Systematic Theology

2. Historical Theology
3. Philosophical Theology
4. Moral Theology

Religious Ethics [Christian Ethics]

1. Contemporary Theological Ethics
2. History of Christian Ethics
3. Moral Philosophy
4. One of the following:
 - (a) Systematic Theology
 - (b) Philosophical Theology
 - (c) Biblical Ethics
 - (d) Applied Ethics
 - (e) Ethics of Another Major Religious Tradition

Religion and Culture

1. Modern Study of Religion
2. Contemporary theories and Critiques of Religion and Culture
3. Religion in Comparative Perspective
4. Elective (chosen in view of the student's anticipated dissertation)

Principles of Governance

1. All tenured and tenure-track members of the faculty of Perkins School of Theology and of the Department of Religious Studies in Dedman College, along with the Maguire University Professor of Ethics and the Scurlock Professor of Human Values, are members of the faculty of the Graduate Program in Religious Studies, unless, in consultation with the Dean of Perkins, the chair of the Department, or the Provost (as the case may be), they explicitly exempt themselves from membership. Other members of the faculty of Southern Methodist University may become members of the GPRS faculty upon the recommendation of the Director, by vote of the GPRS faculty.
2. The GPRS faculty as a body exercises academic oversight of the program; individual members of that faculty participate in instructional activity as their interests and competences and the needs of the program may determine. A member of the faculty is expected to attend its meetings; to serve on the Steering Committee if elected; and to participate, as appropriate, in the work of one or more fields.
3. The faculty shall establish, review, and revise policies governing admission, curriculum, fields of study, and degree requirements, subject to the approval of the Graduate Council of Dedman College. It shall consider other matters pertinent to the operation and well-being of the program that may be brought to its attention and shall act upon them, or recommend action to others, as may be appropriate to the case.
4. The faculty shall meet annually in April or May, and on the call of the Director at other times as the need may arise. The Director shall preside. The Assistant to the Director shall serve as secretary to the faculty, and shall keep the minutes of its meetings.
5. The faculty shall delegate certain responsibilities to a Steering Committee.

Composition:

The Steering Committee shall consist of the Director, who will serve as its chair; the Chair of the Department of Religious Studies; one member of the faculty for each field of study in the GPRS, and, if recommended by the Director, one or more additional faculty members; and two GPRS students. The overall composition of the Steering Committee should reflect diversity in gender, ethnicity, academic affiliation, and other pertinent respects.

The Director and the Chair of the Department shall serve *ex officio*. The other faculty members of the Committee shall serve two-year terms, staggered so that approximately half will be replaced each year. The new members shall be elected by the GPRS faculty each spring for the ensuing academic year, upon the nomination of the faculty of the respective fields. The Director may, at his or her discretion, nominate one or more additional faculty members. Nominations may be made from the floor. The student members shall serve one-year terms, and shall be elected by the registered students of the GPRS each spring for the ensuing year.

The student members of the Steering Committee shall participate fully in the work of the Committee except when individual student cases involving confidential information are being considered.

The Assistant to the Director shall serve as secretary to the Steering Committee, and shall keep the minutes of its meetings.

Duties:

The Steering Committee shall exercise general oversight of the program on behalf of the faculty. It shall be responsible for ongoing program assessment and for long-range planning, and shall bring to the GPRS faculty any recommendations it deems advisable concerning modifications in any aspect of the program. It shall serve as an advocate for the interests of the program within the University, and shall work with the Director, the Dean of Perkins School of Theology, the Dean of Dedman College, and the Dean of Research and Graduate Studies to further these interests.

It shall oversee the process by which applications for admission to the GPRS are considered, and with the advice of the faculty of the various fields of study, shall act upon applications.

It shall monitor the progress of students in course, act upon students' admission to candidacy, and consider individual student petitions for any variations from normal curricular requirements.

Upon the recommendation of the faculty of the pertinent fields, it shall approve students' plans of study and dissertation proposals.

It shall undertake such other duties as the faculty may assign to it.

6. The faculty involved in each field of study shall collectively undertake certain responsibilities in the program. The faculty in the individual fields of study shall be convened as needed

- to monitor the progress of students in course; to review students' plans of study, to consider the relationship between faculty resources in the field and students' interests and objectives, and to advise the students, each other, and the Steering Committee accordingly;
- to review students' dissertation proposals;
- to review applications for admission, and to make recommendations to the Steering Committee;
- to nominate faculty for membership on the Steering Committee; and
- to take up any other matters pertinent to the operation of the field that they may wish to consider, whether on their own initiative or upon the request of the Steering Committee, the Director, or the faculty as a whole.

A member of the Steering Committee shall normally serve as convener of the faculty involved in each field for these purposes.

7. Amendments to these Principles of Governance may be proposed by any member of the faculty, or by the Steering Committee. Any proposed amendment must be distributed in writing to all members of the faculty at least seven days prior to the meeting at which it is to be considered. In order to pass, an amendment must receive the support of a majority of the members of the faculty who are based in the Department of Religious Studies and a majority of the members of the faculty who are based in Perkins School of Theology.

Requirements for Degree Programs

Requirements for Candidacy: The requirements for admission to candidacy, whether for the M.A. degree or for the Ph.D. degree, are the following:

- (1) satisfactorily completing two semesters (24 credit hours) of course work, as follows:
 - (a) two semesters in the core seminar in the four areas of religious studies (12 credit hours)
 - (b) two graded courses in the student's field of study (6 credit hours)
 - (c) two independent study courses, usually in a foreign language (6 credit hours)
- (2) passing an examination oral and/or written, in an approved foreign language;
- (3) passing a four-hour written comprehensive examination in each of the four areas of religious studies.

The time limits within which these requirements must be satisfied are as follows:

- (1) the core seminar must be satisfactorily completed no later than the end of the first year;
- (2) the language examination must be taken at the beginning of the first year (students who do not pass will be allowed to retake the examination at the middle of the first year);
- (3) the four written examinations must be passed no later than the end of the first year.

In this and all subsequent specifications of time limits, the beginning, middle, and end of the year refer respectively to the examination periods that fall in August, January, and May of the academic year.

Admission to Candidacy: Upon satisfactory completion of the requirements for candidacy, the student is reviewed by the Steering Committee and admitted to candidacy either for the M.A. degree or for the Ph.D. degree. Admission to candidacy for a degree is based on the student's overall performance in meeting the requirements for candidacy and will ordinarily occur in October of the second year.

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Qualifying Requirements: In addition to the requirements for candidacy, students must meet two further requirements for field-level study:

- (1) passing an examination, oral and/or written, in a second approved foreign language;
- (2) securing the Steering Committee's approval of a proposed Plan of Study for meeting the field requirements for the Ph.D. degree (see the "Guidelines for Preparing and Securing the Approval of the Plan of Study")

Students in Biblical Studies must take the second language examination no later than the end of the first year (students who do not pass at that time will be allowed to retake the examination at the beginning of the second year); all other students must take the second language examination no later than the beginning of the second year (students who do not pass at that time will be allowed to retake the examination at the middle of the second year). All students must submit their two-part proposals no later than the beginning of the second year.

Field Requirements: The field requirements for the Ph.D. degree are the following:

- (1) satisfactorily completing an approved program of three semesters (36 credit hours) of field-level study;
- (2) passing written comprehensive examinations in the specific subfields approved for examination in the student's field, each of these examinations consisting of a six-hour written examination based on the bibliography agreed upon with the examiner;
- (3) securing the Steering Committee's approval of a dissertation proposal endorsed by the student's adviser, two other members of the faculty, and one reader from outside the GPRS faculty (see the "Guidelines for Preparing and Securing the Approval of the Dissertation Proposal");
- (4) satisfactorily completing a one-semester course of practice teaching in religious studies (or an approved alternative);
- (5) satisfactorily completing the approved doctoral dissertation;
- (6) passing an oral examination covering the student's entire course of study as well as the dissertation.

The time limits within which these requirements must be satisfied are as follows:

- (1) the three semesters of field-level study must be completed no later than the middle of the third year;
- (2) the written comprehensive examinations must be passed no later than the middle of the third year;
- (3) the dissertation proposal must be submitted and approved no later than the end of the third year or, in the case of students in Biblical Studies, no later than the beginning of the fourth year;
- (4) the one-semester course of practice teaching (or approved alternative) will normally be completed during the fourth year and must be completed no later than the end of the fifth year;
- (5) and (6) the dissertation must be satisfactorily completed and the oral examination passed no later than five calendar years after the student's admission to candidacy.

In addition to the field requirements listed above, students in Biblical Studies must also pass examinations, oral and/or written, in a third and a fourth approved foreign language by no later than the beginning of the fourth year.

Degree of Master of Arts

In addition to the requirements for candidacy, there are two further requirements for the M.A. degree:

- (1) satisfactorily completing a master's thesis on an approved topic in one of the four areas of studies;
- (2) passing an oral examination covering the student's entire course of study as well as the master's thesis.

These two additional requirements must be satisfied no later than two calendar years after the student's admission to candidacy.

Degree Requirements and Time Limits

Candidacy Requirements

	No later than
Pass 1 st language exam	August of 1 st year
Complete 24 hours course work (12 hrs. Core Seminar, 6 hrs. graded courses in field, 6 hrs. independent studies)	May of 1 st year
Pass a qualifying exam in each of the four areas of religious studies	May of 1 st year

Additional Qualifying Requirements for the Ph.D. Degree

	No later than
Complete candidacy requirements (see above)	May of 1 st year
Pass 2 nd language exam	August of 2 nd year (Biblical Studies: May of 1 st year)
Secure Steering Committee's approval of Plan of Study	October of 2 nd year

M.A. Degree Only

	No later than
Complete thesis	2 calendar years after admission to candidacy
Pass oral examination covering thesis and entire field of study	2 calendar years after admission to candidacy

Field Requirements for the Ph.D. Degree

	No later than
Complete 3 semesters (36 hrs) field-level study	December of 3 rd year
Pass four written field exams	January of 3 rd year
Biblical Studies only: Pass 3 rd & 4 th language exams	August of 4 th year
Secure Steering Committee's approval of dissertation proposal	May of 3 rd year (Biblical Studies: October of 4 th year)
Practice teach one-semester course	May of 5 th year
Complete dissertation	5 calendar years after admission to candidacy
Pass oral examination covering dissertation and entire field of study	5 calendar years after admission to candidacy

Degree Requirements and Time Limits

The preceding page provides a chart of degree requirements and time limits for the M.A. and Ph. D. degrees.

With regard to these time limits, the following policies apply.

1. *Language Examinations.* The student is allowed one re-take of a language examination which the student fails the first time around. The re-take must be scheduled for the next following examination period after the examination period in which the student fails the language exam. Thereafter, the student is allowed to retake a failed language exam only (a) upon the recommendation of the language examiner and (b) with the approval of the Steering Committee.
2. *Field Examinations.* If a student fails a field examination, the student is allowed one re-take of the examination, (a) upon the recommendation of the examiner and (b) with the approval of the Steering Committee. The re-take must be scheduled for the next following examination period.
3. *Plans of Study.* There are no exceptions to the requirement that the Plans of Study be submitted no later than October of the second year.
4. *Dissertation Proposals.* Dissertation proposals may be submitted later than the stipulated deadline only by petition to the Steering Committee and with the Steering Committee's approval of the student's petition.
5. *Completion of Course Work.* No exceptions are allowed to the requirement that the first-year course work be completed no later than May of the first year of study. In certain cases, exceptions may be granted by the Director to the requirement that all field-level course work be completed no later than December of the third year of study, i.e., cases in which a course or courses is/are only offered on a schedule that requires the student to take the course or courses in the spring semester of the student's third year. *N. B.: In such cases, the student is permitted to postpone to May of the third year any field exam preparation for which requires such courses.*
6. *Leaves of Absence.* In cases when a student takes a leave of absence from the GPRS for medical or other valid personal reasons (leaves of absence must be approved by the Steering Committee), any deadlines which the student has not yet met at the time of taking the leave of absence will be extended by a period equivalent to the period of the student's leave of absence.

In special circumstances, exceptions to these policies may be granted upon petition to the Steering Committee and with the Steering Committee's approval. In such cases, the student's petition to the Steering Committee must give a detailed account of the circumstances that the student believes to justify the request for an exception.

Languages and Language Examinations

Requirement: Students in the M.A. degree program are required to pass an examination, oral and/or written, in *one* approved foreign language. Students in the Ph.D. degree program are required to pass examinations, oral and/or written, in *two* approved foreign languages; students in the Ph.D. degree program in Biblical Studies must pass examinations, oral and/or written, in Hebrew and Greek and in *two additional* approved modern foreign languages.

Time Limits: All students must take an examination in an approved foreign language at the beginning of the first year (students who do not pass will be allowed to retake the examination at the middle of the first year). Students in the Ph.D. program must take an examination in a second approved foreign language no later than the beginning of the second year (students who do not pass at that time will be allowed to retake the examination at the middle of the second year) or, in the case of students in Biblical Studies, no later than the end of the first year (students who do not pass at that time will be allowed to retake the examination at the beginning of the second year). Students in Biblical Studies must also pass examinations in a third and a fourth approved foreign language no later than the beginning of the fourth year.

Approved Languages: The foreign languages approved for examination in both the M.A. and the Ph.D. degree programs are French, Spanish, German, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. When a student's course of study makes it necessary or desirable that the student be examined in a foreign language not already approved, the student may petition the Steering Committee for approval to be examined in that language. The student must submit the petition to the Secretary to the Program in writing no later than sixty days prior to the beginning of the examination period in which the student wishes to schedule the examination.

Language Examinations: The purpose of the language examinations is to assure that the student is competent in reading the language in question and in using it in research. Thus the language examiner is required to certify whether the student is or is not sufficiently competent in reading the language to be able to do research in the primary and/or secondary literature written in that language. The examinations may be oral as well as written; and the student will be required to demonstrate competence in reading the various kinds of literature in the language in question that are relevant to scholarship in the student's area or field of religious studies. The specific form and content of the language examinations, however, are left entirely to the discretion of the language examiners; and students should consult the language examiners directly for further information about the language examinations and about appropriate preparation for them. The names of the examiners for the various approved foreign languages can be obtained from the Secretary to the Program.

Administration of Language Examinations: "Request to Take a Language Examination" forms are available online or from the office of the Secretary to the Program. The completed form, signed by the examiner, must be submitted to the Secretary to the Program no later than thirty days prior to the beginning of the examination period in which the student wishes to schedule the examination. Language examinations are normally taken during one of the regularly scheduled examinations periods of the academic year, and (except for any oral component) are administered by the Secretary to the Program.

Written Comprehensive Examinations

Requirement: Students in both the M.A. and the Ph.D. degree programs are required to pass written comprehensive examinations in the four areas of religious studies (the qualifying examinations) by the end of the first year of study. Students in the Ph.D. program are also required to pass written comprehensive examinations in the four subfields of their field of specialization (the field examinations) no later than the middle of their third year of study.

General: All written comprehensive examinations, both qualifying and field, are taken during the three two-week examination periods scheduled annually in September, January, and May. Faculty members serving as instructors in the core seminar also serve both as directors of the related independent study of students in the seminar and as examiners for the same students' qualifying examinations. Examiners, as well as second readers, for the field examinations are appointed by the director in some cases and, in others, are secured by the student in the process of preparing the two-part proposal. All arrangements for taking written comprehensive examinations, whether qualifying or field, must be made directly by the student with the appropriate examiner. Such arrangements include the student's formal request to take an examination, which must be submitted to the examiner in writing no later than thirty days prior to the beginning of the examination period in which the student wishes the examination to be scheduled. Copies of the form for making this request are available from the Secretary to the Program.

Scheduling: A schedule of all written comprehensive examinations to be taken during a two-week examination period is posted by the Secretary some two weeks prior to the beginning of that period. All of these examinations are administered by the Secretary; and students taking examinations should report to the office of the Program on the day and at the hour indicated. *Qualifying* examinations are four-hour examinations and are scheduled from 9:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on the days fixed for the examinations. *Field* examinations are six-hour examinations and are scheduled from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on the days fixed for the examinations.

Further information about the comprehensive examinations, both qualifying and field, may be obtained from the several examiners; and it is with the examiners, in particular, that students preparing for field examinations should reach agreement on the topics, materials, and bibliographies to be covered by the examinations in their specific cases.

Guidelines for Preparing a Plan of Study

1. Developing a plan of study

During the spring term of the first year, each student is to prepare a plan of study for the ensuing three terms (thirty-six term hours) of course work. In developing this plan, the student should keep at least three things in mind: the field examinations, the dissertation, and life beyond the Ph.D. program. Together with the student's previous academic preparation and experience, the course work taken over these three terms should prepare the student successfully to complete the four field examinations designated in his or her field. It should also provide some of the groundwork for the dissertation he or she expects to write. And it should equip the student for his or her anticipated future career, e.g., as a teacher and scholar in a college, university, or seminary setting. Although these three considerations are listed here in an order of obvious priority, all three should enter into one's planning from the outset. It is not unusual to discover close and mutually reinforcing relationships among all three.

The thirty-six hours of course work beyond the first year may include courses of three different types:

- (1) Regular courses in the curricula of Dedman College and/or Perkins School of Theology that are approved for graduate study in the student's field. (Undergraduate courses will be approved only if they have a particular relevance to the student's course of study, and only if the student has reached a prior agreement with the instructor on additional work to be done to raise the requirements of the course to the graduate level.)
- (2) Directed study courses in which the student (or students) and a faculty member agree to meet not less than six times during the term to discuss the material under study, and which require the submission of substantial written work to which the faculty member assigns grades as well as assigning an overall letter grade for the course as a whole.
- (3) Independent study courses in which the student and a faculty member agree on a bibliography for study that the student will pursue independently, and which do not require either the submission of written work or the assignment of letter grades.

Directed study and independent study courses are arranged individually by the student or students with an appropriate member of the faculty who is willing to undertake such a course.

The proposed plan of study must include not less than twenty-seven term hours of regular and directed study courses, i.e., courses in which a course grade will be assigned. For students in fields requiring additional competence in languages, the plan may include up to six term hours of independent study in a language.

Special note: Students in the field of New Testament are required to include the following courses in their plans of study: (1) a course in Greek exegesis; (2) a course in Hebrew exegesis; (3) a course in Contemporary Methods of Interpretation; (4) a course in Second Temple Judaism; (5) a course in the Greco-Roman Milieu; and (6) a course in Christianity in the Second Century. In addition, New Testament students are required to take at least one course in the gospels and at least one course in Paul, requirements which may be satisfied by the regularly-offered Greek exegesis course and/or by independent study courses. Students in New Testament should consult their advisors with regard to which courses in particular will satisfy the listed requirements.

2. *Submitting the plan of study for approval*

By the end of September of the second year, each student is to submit his or her plan of study in writing to the Steering Committee for its approval. This written plan of study is to carry the endorsement of a faculty member in the student's field who, by endorsing the plan, agrees to be the student's field advisor. The plan of study submitted is to include the following elements:

1. A brief statement (perhaps half a page in length) indicating which of the fields the student is pursuing, what particular focus within that field is guiding his or her plan of study, and—with whatever degree of specification seems appropriate at this point—what he or she anticipates as a topic or problem area for the dissertation. (One might, for example, indicate The Christian Tradition as one's field, and a particular era, region, or aspect of that tradition as one's focus. Or one might indicate Systematic Theology as one's field, and identify a particular doctrine or a particular theologian or theological movement as one's focus.)
2. A listing of the four field examinations to be taken, with an indication of the ways in which those examinations are to be shaped, insofar as such shaping is called for in the examination protocols, in light of one's objectives. For example, students in the field of the Christian Tradition are to specify a period of ecclesiastical history and the corresponding period in intellectual and cultural history, while students in the field of the Philosophy of Religion are to specify the particular topics that they will undertake for the examination in topics in contemporary philosophy.
3. A listing of the courses taken during the first year.
4. A program of study for the fall and spring of the second year and the fall of the third year, including the specific courses to be taken in each of those terms, and the bearing of each of these courses upon preparation for field examinations, dissertation research, and/or other relevant purposes. The schedule should also indicate in which examination period the student intends to take each of the field examinations.

The written plan of study is to be accompanied by a completed *Directed Study Adviser Request Form* and supporting documentation for each directed study course listed, and by a tentative bibliography, approved by the supervising faculty member, for each independent study course listed except for those devoted to language study.

Guidelines for Preparing the Dissertation Proposal

Requirement: To earn the Ph.D. degree, a student is required satisfactorily to complete an approved doctoral dissertation. To this end, the student must first secure the Steering Committee's approval of a dissertation proposal endorsed by the student's adviser (normally the member of the faculty who has served as the student's field-level adviser), by two additional members of the faculty, and by an external reader.

Dissertation Proposal: The purpose of the doctoral dissertation is to contribute to the ongoing discussion of the problem with which it deals in the relevant field of specialization. Accordingly, the dissertation proposal must be formulated in such a way as to make the student's accomplishment of this purpose within the specified time limits seem a reasonable objective. Specifically, the dissertation proposal must include the following four components:

- (1) a statement of the specific question or problem to be investigated;
- (2) a statement of the reasons that make an investigation of this question or problem important and desirable both for the ongoing scholarly discussion in the relevant field and for the student individually;
- (3) a self-assessment by the student of her or his qualifications, including competences in foreign languages, to carry out the proposed investigations; and
- (4) either a bibliography of the primary and secondary literature basic to the proposed investigation or some other appropriate indication of the student's awareness of the bibliographic requirements of the investigation and of ways and means of meeting those requirements.

Excluding the bibliography, the dissertation proposal should be **five to ten typewritten pages (1500 to 3000 words) in length.**

Endorsements: Before submitting the dissertation proposal to the Steering Committee, the student must secure its endorsement by the student's adviser, by two additional members of the faculty, and by an external reader, who are likewise willing to work with the student in satisfying the two final requirements for the Ph.D. degree (i.e., the completion of the dissertation and the oral examination). In effect, then, the Steering Committee's approval of the dissertation proposal constitutes, at the same time, its appointment of these members of the faculty to serve as the student's dissertation committee, together with the external reader, and as the primary examiners for the student's oral examination.

Nota bene: the dissertation proposal is to be submitted no later than the end of the third year by students in fields other than Biblical Studies and no later than the beginning of the fourth year by students in Biblical Studies.

Procedures for Preparing and Securing the Approval of the Dissertation and for the Oral Examination

Appointing the Dissertation Committee: The Steering Committee's approval of the student's dissertation proposal is, in effect, its appointment of three members of the faculty as the chairperson and other two members respectively of the student's dissertation committee as well as an outside reader. It is understood that, from this time on, it is this committee, and most particularly the student's adviser, who is its chairperson, that has immediate supervisory responsibility for his or her course of study, including preparing and securing the approval of the dissertation, and conducting the oral examination thereon.

Preparing the Dissertation: So far as the procedures for preparing the dissertation are concerned, it is up to the chairperson of the committee, in consultation with the student, to establish and follow such procedures as may seem to him or her appropriate. In other words, while the Steering Committee makes no regulation as to *what* these procedures should be, it does rule *that* definite procedures be established and followed and that, therefore, they be mutually understood by the chairperson and the student. One way of securing such understanding is for the chairperson to propose such procedures and to discuss them with the student until they can be agreed on, and then to require that the student write up his or her understanding of them, giving a copy thereof to the chairperson. Copies of the current guidelines for preparation of theses and dissertations are available from the Graduate Office of Dedman College.

Securing the Approval of the Dissertation: Securing the approval of the dissertation is regulated as follows. Every year, the official calendar of the Graduate Office of Dedman College specifies two dates toward the end of each semester that determine the schedule for the approval of dissertations and for oral examinations. The later of these dates (a week or so prior to the official close of the semester) is the last day of oral/written examinations for students seeking degrees at the close of that semester. The earlier date (three weeks or so prior to the official end of the semester) is the last day to submit approved dissertations in final form to the Dean of the College. Therefore, while an approved dissertation in final form may be submitted to the Dean at any time earlier in the semester, and while the oral examination on the dissertation may be held at any time after the dissertation has thus been submitted, these two dates set the ultimate possible limits for the schedule to be followed by both the student and the chairperson and the other members of the dissertation committee. Accordingly, prior to the first date specified, all of the following procedures must have already been completed: (1) the student must have submitted his or her completed dissertation to the chairperson and secured the chairperson's tentative approval of it; (2) the chairperson must have forwarded the tentatively approved dissertation to the other members of the committee for their reading and approval; (3) the other members of the committee must have read and approved the dissertation, with or without proposals for revision, and have reported accordingly directly to the chairperson; (4) the chairperson must have given final approval of the dissertation, having first seen to it that the student has made any and all proposed revisions that, in discussion with the other members of the committee have seemed indicated; and (5) the student must have prepared the final copy of the approved dissertation for submission to the Dean. Ordinarily, therefore, the chairperson should require that the student submit his or her completed dissertation early enough to have secured the chairperson's tentative approval by no later than sixty days prior to the official close of the semester. This allows some four to five weeks for the other members of the committee to read and approve the dissertation, and for the student to prepare the final copies of the approved dissertation for submission to the Dean. In any event, before the student submits the dissertation to the Dean, he or she must secure written

confirmation by the Director that the dissertation has been approved by all members of the committee.

Oral examination: Only after the approved dissertation has thus been submitted can the oral examination of the student on the dissertation be held—although it must be held, naturally, on or before the last day for such examinations specified in the calendar of Dedman College if the student expects to take his or her degree at the close of that semester. Since the dissertation by that time has already been read and approved not only by the chairperson but also by the other members of the committee, whose proposals for revision, if any, will already have been taken into account, the purpose of the oral examination is in no way to propose or insist on revisions in the dissertation. Its purpose, rather, is to require the student to defend the thesis, and thus the supporting argument, of his or her completed and approved dissertation in face of the kind of criticism that may fairly be expected to be made of it by his or her scholarly peers. Consequently, the evaluation of the oral examination is distinct from the evaluation of the dissertation itself and is determined solely on the basis of the student's success or resourcefulness in defending the thesis and supporting argument of his or her dissertation.

Policy on the Limits of Faculty Responsibility

Two points of this policy in particular need to be clarified: (1) faculty responsibility for students during the summer; and (2) faculty responsibility for students during a period of approved research leave.

With respect to both points, the official policy of the Program is that members of the faculty have no such responsibilities. Therefore, neither the Director of the Program nor its students may properly expect faculty members to continue their instructional, advisory, or chairpersonal responsibilities for students during either the summer or a period of approved research leave.

At the same time, it should be clear that this is the official policy with respect to the *responsibilities* of faculty members, not with respect to their *rights*. A member of the faculty certainly has the right to continue responsibilities for students during either of these periods, whether as instructor, adviser, or chairperson of a dissertation committee. But this is a right to be exercised entirely at the faculty member's own option, and by agreement with his or her students—in no way a proper expectation either of the Director of the Program or of the students concerned.

This means, among other things, that no examinations—qualifying, field, language, or oral—may be scheduled during the summer; and that, therefore, no student may properly expect to complete the requirements for his or her degree during a period of approved research leave for the chairperson of his or her dissertation committee.

Finally, the Steering Committee recommends to any chairperson of a student's dissertation committee who will be on approved research leave during the period when the student expects to complete the requirements for his or her degree that the chairperson make special arrangements with the student for completing these requirements—whether by postponing their completion until after the chairperson's return from leave; by the student's petitioning the Director to appoint another chairperson of the committee; or, possibly—and entirely at the option of the chairperson—by his or her agreement with the student to continue the responsibilities of chairperson even during the period of approved research leave.

Evaluations, Grades, and Necessary Conditions for Continuing in Study

Evaluations: A student's performance in both the M.A. and the Ph.D. degree programs is evaluated, first of all, by the grading procedures in force in his or her several courses, including reading courses and other forms of directed independent study. In addition, there are evaluations of the student's performance in the core seminar in religious studies, as well as of his or her performance on language examinations and on the written comprehensive examinations at both the qualifying and the field levels of study. Finally, there are evaluations of the student's performance on his or her M.A. thesis and/or Ph.D. dissertation, as well as on the oral examination, or examinations, thereon, and, in the case of a student for the Ph.D. degree, of his or her performance during the one-semester course of required practice teaching. The purpose of each of these evaluations is to assess in some way and at some level the student's operational competence as a scholar-teacher in religious studies.

Grades: In accordance with the general regulations of Dedman College, all evaluations of a student's course work appear on his or her permanent academic record as letter grades (including pluses and/or minuses). But these letter grades are in many if not most cases merely a way of transcribing what are originally calculated as number grades, and number grades do, in fact, provide the currency for most other evaluations of the student's performance—in the required seminars and on language examinations as well as on written comprehensive examinations at both the qualifying and the field levels of study. At the same time, all evaluations other than of the student's course work—including those of his or her performance on the M.A. thesis and/or the Ph.D. dissertation, as well as the oral examination, or examinations, thereon—appear on his or her placement dossier neither as letter nor as number grades but in terms of yet a third system employing the four grades of "Honors," "High Pass," "Pass," and "Fail" respectively. The following are the equivalences that are understood to obtain between these three systems of variously expressing or recording evaluations:

92-100	A	Honors
90-91	A-	High Pass
87-89	B+	
82-86	B	Pass
80-81	B-	
77-79	C+	Fail
72-76	C	
70-71	C-	

Necessary Conditions for Continuing in Study: Generally speaking, the necessary conditions for a student's continuing in study are two: (1) securing a grade of Pass or better (= B– or better = 80 or better) on all evaluations of his or her performance in courses attempted or in satisfying any other degree program requirement; and (2) satisfying all such requirements within the time limits specified for doing so. Failure to fulfill either of these conditions is reason enough for a student not to be continued in study, although in the event of such failure the student will not be discontinued automatically or without formal notification from the Director of the Program. Of

course, admission to candidacy for either the M.A. or the Ph.D. degree is the single most critical point in the student's continuation in study. At the time such admission is decided (ordinarily the October of the student's second year in the Program), decision is made, on the basis of his or her overall performance in satisfying the four requirements for candidacy, between three possible alternatives: (1) that he or she be admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree; (2) that he or she be admitted to candidacy for the M.A. degree; or (3) that he or she be admitted to candidacy for neither degree and thus not be continued in study. But as critical as the decision between these alternatives certainly is, the student's continuation in study after admission to candidacy remains dependent on fulfilling the same two necessary conditions as before: he or she must continue to secure a grade of Pass or better on all evaluations of his or her performance in satisfying the remaining requirements for the degree; and he or she must continue to satisfy each of these requirements within the time limits specified for doing so.

Policy on Student Academic Responsibility

“Academic honesty boils down to three simple but powerful principles:

- When you say you did the work yourself, you actually did it.
- When you rely on someone else’s work, you cite it. When you use their words, you quote them openly and accurately, and you cite them, too.
- When you present research materials, you present them fairly and truthfully. That’s true whether the research involves data, documents, or the writings of other scholars.

These are bedrock principles, easy to remember and follow. They apply to all your classes, labs, papers, and exams. They apply to everyone in the university, from freshmen to professors. They’re not just principles for students. They’re principles for academic honesty across the entire university.”¹

I. Academic Honesty and Dishonesty

Descriptions of what constitutes academic honesty and dishonesty may be found in the Honor Code of Southern Methodist University (available online at http://www.smu.edu/studentlife/PCL_05_HC.asp) and in the “Statement of Academic Responsibility” of Perkins School of Theology (included as Appendix B in the Student Handbook and available online via http://www.smu.edu/theology/community/community_main.html). The following paragraphs are taken from the latter document:

What is Academic Honesty?

In its broadest sense, academic honesty is maintaining standards of truth and personal integrity in all statements or actions that relate to one’s life in the University. It is not distinct from other standards of honesty, but merely defines the context in which that honesty is maintained. But in an institution in which the responsible exchange of information and ideas is of paramount importance, standards of honesty have a correlative importance.

What is Academic Dishonesty?

Defined inclusively, academic dishonesty is behavior which misrepresents the origin or nature of one’s activities in the University, or which violates the integrity of one’s relationship to the University community, whether by design or accident. Misrepresentation includes both the act of falsification, and the neglect of providing a true representation when it is called for. Maintaining an honest relationship to the University requires that students learn what constitutes accidental misrepresentation so as to avoid it; not knowing that an action is generally construed as dishonest does not excuse the action. Within this broad definition, academic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to) the following:

1. Cheating or copying on a quiz, test, or examination, or other class exercise which is required to be performed independently and individually.
2. Misrepresenting one’s academic standing or record.
3. Misrepresenting the causes for missing quizzes, tests, etc., or for lateness in completing assigned work.
4. Aiding or concealing acts of dishonesty by other persons.

¹ Charles Lipson, *Doing Honest Work in College* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 3.

5. Acts of theft or unauthorized access to academic materials belonging to others, whether students or faculty members.
6. Soliciting, aiding, or attempting to aid another in planning or committing an act of academic dishonesty.
7. Submitting as one's own work materials that have been wholly or partially prepared by others.
8. Representing that one's work is the result of research or study which one has not personally performed.
9. Stealing or defacing library books.
10. Plagiarism.

These statements, intended primarily for students in undergraduate and professional degree programs, do not specifically address some of the special aspects of academic work in a program such as the GPRS, e.g., practice teaching, but the basic principles identified here can be extended to such contexts. Beyond that, students are encouraged to consult their professors or any of the more extensive treatments of academic honesty and academic ethics currently available. It is especially important for those preparing for careers in teaching and scholarship both to understand what academic integrity requires and to exhibit that integrity in their own work.

It should also be noted that graduate students serving in any instructional capacity at Southern Methodist University are subject to the same standards of professional conduct as are binding on regular faculty members (see especially policies 6.1-6.3 in the University Policy Manual, <http://www.smu.edu/policy/>.)

II. Administrative Procedures

The faculty of the Graduate Program in Religious Studies has established the following procedures to be followed in dealing with incidents of suspected academic dishonesty:

1. Should an instructor believe that a student has committed an act of academic dishonesty, the instructor will notify the Director in writing. The Director will then arrange as soon as possible a meeting with the student and the instructor. The Director will be present at this meeting. Should he or she wish, the student may also have another faculty member present. At the meeting, the instructor will present his or her concerns to the student. The student may then respond to those concerns. Following this, the instructor will consult in private with both the Director and the faculty member invited by the student (if a faculty member has been invited). If after consultation, the instructor still believes that academic dishonesty has taken place, he or she will assign an appropriate penalty. (The penalty can range from a failing grade on the assignment to a failing grade for the course.) Final authority for determining whether academic dishonesty has taken place and for the determination of the penalty rests solely with the instructor.

Following the meeting, the decision of the instructor and the nature of the penalty assigned by the instructor will be communicated in writing by the Director to the student, with a copy to the instructor. Following the meeting, the instructor will also prepare a written account of the student's academic dishonesty and the penalty. This account is to be placed in the student's academic file.

Should the instructor deem the student's academic dishonesty to be sufficiently grievous as to call into question that student's fitness to continue in the program, he or she may also request that the matter be referred to the Steering Committee, for consideration of whether the student should be dismissed from the Graduate Program (see section 6).

2. A student accused of academic dishonesty has the right to appeal the decision of the instructor. His or her appeal as described here may concern only the determination of academic dishonesty, not the grade resulting from the dishonesty. (A student wishing to appeal a grade assigned by an instructor should follow the procedures described in section 7.)

Two levels of appeal are possible.

The student may appeal, first, to the Steering Committee. Should the student wish to appeal, he or she will inform the Director within two weeks of receiving the letter described above. The director should as soon as possible arrange for a special meeting of the Steering Committee, in executive session. Relevant documentation will be provided to all the members of the Steering Committee in advance of the meeting. Relevant documentation includes: (i) the assignment deemed by the instructor to be academically dishonest, (ii) any supporting documentation the instructor deems necessary to establish academic dishonesty (e.g., photocopies of books plagiarized or websites copied), (iii) the written statement which the instructor placed in the student's file following the meeting mentioned above, and (iv) a written statement from the student. The steering committee will consider the written documentation, and then consult with both the student and instructor, either separately or together, at the committee's discretion. Following the examination of the evidence, the committee is required to vote as to the question of whether the student has committed an act of academic dishonesty. A majority vote will be decisive.

Should the student wish to pursue the matter further, he or she may next appeal the decision reached through the Steering Committee to the office of the Dean of Graduate Studies. All written documentation considered by the Steering Committee, as well as the minutes of its meeting, will be provided to the Dean's office. The Dean's office will be responsible for determining further procedures to be followed for review of the appeal.

3. When an instructor or other concerned party (e.g., the Director of Bridwell Library) believes that a student has committed an act of academic dishonesty in a context other than course work (for example, in a field examination or dissertation, or in the case of theft or destruction of library materials), the procedures described in section 1 and 2 will be followed.

4. Upon a second determination of academic dishonesty, the matter shall be referred to the Steering Committee, for consideration of whether the student should be dismissed the Graduate Program (see section 6).

5. Should the penalty for an act of academic dishonesty result in a student's being unable to fulfill the requirements for the Graduate Program or to miss deadlines for meeting those requirements, the Director will describe to the Steering Committee how the penalty assigned by the instructor affects the student's progress. The Steering Committee will then need to consider whether the student should be allowed to continue in the program, and if so, under what conditions (see section 6).

6. If the Steering committee is called on to determine whether the student should be allowed to continue in the program, the director should as soon as possible arrange for a special meeting of the Steering Committee, in executive session. Relevant documentation will be provided to all the members of the Steering Committee in advance of the meeting. Relevant documentation includes: (i) the assignment deemed by the instructor to be academically dishonest, (ii) any supporting documentation the instructor deems necessary to establish academic dishonesty (e.g., photocopies of books plagiarized or websites copied), (iii) the written statement which the instructor placed in the student's file following the meeting mentioned above, and (iv) a written

statement from the student. If this is the second instance of academic dishonesty, the instructor's letter describing the first instance should also be included. The steering committee will consider the written documentation, and then consult with both the student and instructor or instructors (if this is the second instance), either separately or together, at the committee's discretion. Following the examination of the evidence, the committee is required to vote as to the question of whether the student should be allowed to continue in the program. A majority vote will be decisive.

7. The award of a grade is a matter solely within the academic discretion of the faculty member. A student who wishes to appeal an assigned grade must first discuss the matter with the faculty member who awarded the grade. If the faculty member decides not to seek a grade change, the student may petition the Director of the GPRS for a review of the faculty member's decision. The Director is not authorized to change a grade, even with the consent of the faculty member who awarded it. If, after discussion of the matter with the Director, the faculty member decides to seek a grade change, he or she should follow standard procedures for doing so. The Director will then report the faculty member's decision to the student. If, after discussion of the matter with the Director, the faculty member decides not to pursue a grade change, the student may petition the Dean of Graduate Studies for a review of the faculty member's decision. The Dean may proceed as he or she deems appropriate. By university policy, final authority in the determination of grades rests with the instructor.

Adopted by the GPRS Faculty, May 4, 2007