

Religious Studies MA

Dedman Religious Studies MA Mission Statement

Mission Statement (Full Description):

The Graduate Program in Religious Studies is dedicated to fostering academic excellence and leadership in the study of religion. Our M.A. program is designed to prepare students for impactful careers as teacher-scholars in colleges, universities, and schools of theology. We emphasize rigorous scholarship, critical inquiry, and a deep understanding of diverse religious traditions. Our curriculum allows students to specialize in six key fields—Hebrew Bible, New Testament, Christian Tradition, Systematic Theology, Religious Ethics, and Religion and Culture—while also accommodating qualified nonprofessional students seeking advanced exploration within the liberal arts and sciences. Through a commitment to intellectual growth, ethical reflection, and interdisciplinary engagement, we strive to cultivate informed and compassionate leaders who will contribute to the academic community and society at large.

Does your program offer courses at an off-campus instructional site (not at SMU Dallas campus)?:

No

Does your program offer courses through distance education technology (e.g., asynchronous, synchronous, or both)?:

No

During which academic year were students first enrolled in this program?:

Prior to AY2023-2024

Progress:

Complete

Expertise in History and Development

Step 1A: SLO Number:

1

Commented [SS1]: A. Summary Assessment

The mission statement presents a clear and compelling academic purpose, highlights disciplinary strengths, and conveys the program's commitment to scholarly rigor and leadership. It articulates preparation for academic careers and identifies core fields of study, demonstrating strong relevance and coherence.

However, two rubric-aligned elements are missing:

1. Explicit alignment with SMU's institutional

mission (e.g., global engagement, ethical leadership, research excellence).

B. Suggestions for Improvement

To strengthen alignment with the Mission Statement criteria, consider:

Purpose

- Make graduate outcomes more explicit (e.g., "students will be prepared to...").
- Clarify what intellectual or professional competencies graduates develop.

Alignment

- Briefly link the program's aims to SMU's institutional mission (e.g., ethical leadership, global engagement, research excellence).

Specificity

- Tighten phrasing around program distinctiveness (e.g., interdisciplinary strengths, mentoring, research training).

C. Suggested Revision

"The Graduate Program in Religious Studies, delivered on the SMU main campus in Dallas, Texas, prepares students for scholarly and professional leadership in the academic study of religion. The M.A. program equips graduates with advanced competencies in critical inquiry, research methodologies, and the interpretation of diverse religious traditions, aligning with SMU's mission to cultivate ethical, creative, and globally engaged leaders. Students specialize in one of six fields—Hebrew Bible, New Testament, Christian Tradition, Systematic Theology, Religious Ethics, or Religion and Culture—while also supporting qualified nonprofessional learners pursuing advanced study in the liberal arts and sciences. Through rigorous coursework, interdisciplinary engagement, and sustained faculty mentorship, the program cultivates informed, ethical, and compassionate scholars who contribute meaningfully to academic communities and society."

Step 1C: SLO Statement (Full Description):

Students will demonstrate advanced expertise in the history and development of religious studies by the end of the program.

Step 2A: Measure:

Grades on the Final Project in "RELI6303 History, Theory, and Method in Religious Studies."

The course, "RELI6303 History, Theory, and Method in Religious Studies" covers the history of the study of religion, along with the development of the methods used in the field of religious studies. As such, the final project in the course is an appropriate measure for students' learning about the field.

Linked Documents

[Rubric for Expertise in Historical Understanding.docx](#)

Commented [SS2]: Rubrics should include more than one criterion because most academic tasks and program elements have several important components that contribute to quality. By breaking expectations into clear, distinct criteria—such as clarity, alignment, or relevance—rubrics give more accurate and consistent evaluations. This helps reviewers understand exactly what is strong and what needs improvement, makes expectations transparent for everyone, and supports meaningful, targeted improvement rather than broad or vague feedback.

Step 2B: Type of Measure (check all that apply):

Written paper/project

Step 2C: Is Measure direct or indirect?:

Direct

Step 3A: Target for Measure:

80% of MA students in the GPRS will score with Honors (i.e., 92 and above) on the Final Project in RELI6303 History, Theory, and Method in Religious Studies. This standard was established by looking at the average of exam scores over the past decade.

Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?:

No data collected/reported this cycle (provided explanation in Step 4B)

Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:

No students were enrolled in this program.

Step 4C: Interpretation of Results:

No students were enrolled in this program.

Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan):

No students were enrolled in this program. The faculty will be working toward developing SMART program-level student learning outcomes for the 24-25 AY using the attached rubric as a guide.

Step 5B: Type of Action:

Other

Step 5C: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply):

Administrator

Step 5D: Evidence of Dialogue:

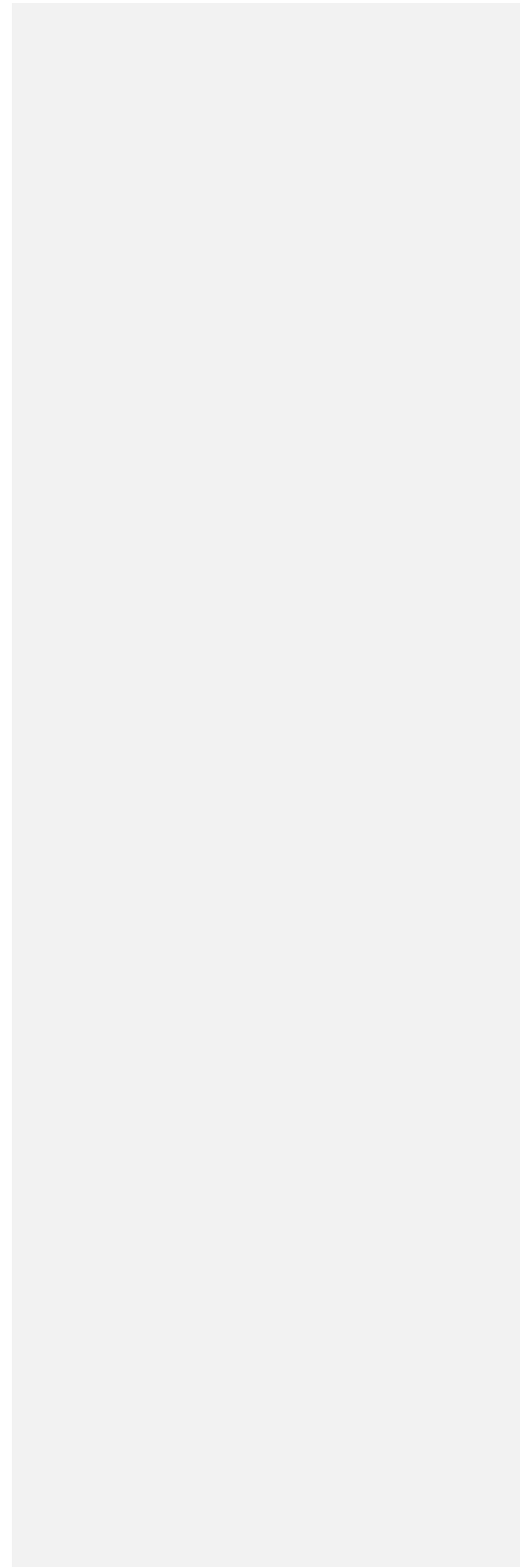
No students were enrolled in this program.

Step 5E: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):

Other

Step 5F: Other Improvements (Full Description):

No students were enrolled in this program.



Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

No students were enrolled in this program.

Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s):

Not applicable for this cycle (explain in Step 6A)

Progress:

Complete

Expertise in Contemporary Methodologies

Step 1A: SLO Number:

2

Step 1C: SLO Statement (Full Description):

Students will demonstrate expertise in contemporary methodologies within the field of religious studies by the end of the program.

Step 2A: Measure:

Grades on the final project in "RELI6304 Contemporary Approaches to the Study of Religion." The course "RELI6304 Contemporary Approaches to the Study of Religion" covers various methodologies currently used in the field of religious studies. As such, the final program in the course is an appropriate measure for students' learning about the contemporary methods of the field.

Linked Documents

[Rubric for Expertise in Contemporary Methodologies.docx](#)

Step 2B: Type of Measure (check all that apply):

Commented [S3]: Rubrics should include more than one criterion because most academic tasks and program elements have several important components that contribute to quality. By breaking expectations into clear, distinct criteria—such as clarity, alignment, or relevance—rubrics give more accurate and consistent evaluations. This helps reviewers understand exactly what is strong and what needs improvement, makes expectations transparent for everyone, and supports meaningful, targeted improvement rather than broad or vague feedback.

Written paper/project

Step 2C: Is Measure direct or indirect?:

Direct

Step 3A: Target for Measure:

80% of students will score with Honors (i.e., 92 and above) on the Final Project in "RELI6304 Contemporary Approaches to the Study of Religion." This benchmark is based on an overview of exam scores over the past decade.

Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?:

No Students Enrolled

Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:

No students were enrolled in this program.

Step 4C: Interpretation of Results:

No students were enrolled in this program.

Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan):

No students were enrolled in this program. The faculty will be working toward developing SMART program-level student learning outcomes for the 24-25 AY using the attached rubric as a guide.

Step 5B: Type of Action:

Other

Step 5C: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply):

Administrator

Step 5D: Evidence of Dialogue:

No students were enrolled in this program.

Step 5E: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):

Other

Step 5F: Other Improvements (Full Description):

No students were enrolled in this program.

Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

No students were enrolled in this program.

Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s):

Not applicable for this cycle (explain in Step 6A)

Progress:

Complete

Proficiency in Writing and Research

Step 1A: SLO Number:

3

Step 1C: SLO Statement (Full Description):

By the end of the program, students will demonstrate advanced proficiency in writing and research within their chosen field of study.

Step 2A: Measure:

Grade on the Thesis. Every thesis in the MA program in Religious Studies is evaluated with the following scores: Honors, High Pass, Pass, Fail.

Linked Documents

[Rubric for GPRS Masters Thesis Scoring.docx](#)

Commented [SS4]: Excellent rubric include a brief description of it in the narration next time, please.

Step 2B: Type of Measure (check all that apply):

Capstone project

Step 2C: Is Measure direct or indirect?:

Direct

Step 3A: Target for Measure:

90% of these scores will be either Honors or High Pass.

Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?:

No data collected/reported this cycle (provided explanation in Step 4B)

Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:

No students were enrolled in this program.

Step 4C: Interpretation of Results:

No students were enrolled in this program.

Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan):

No students were enrolled in this program.

Step 5B: Type of Action:

No action - New/low-enrolled program

Step 5C: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply):

Administrator

Step 5D: Evidence of Dialogue:

No students were enrolled in this program.

Step 5E: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):

Other

Step 5F: Other Improvements (Full Description):

No students were enrolled in this program.

Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

No students were enrolled in this program. The faculty will be working toward developing SMART program-level student learning outcomes for the 24-25 AY using the attached rubric as a guide.

Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s):

Not applicable for this cycle (explain in Step 6A)

Progress:

Complete

Active Participation in the Guild

Step 1A: SLO Number:

4

Step 1C: SLO Statement (Full Description):

Students are required to present a paper, serve on a panel, or otherwise provide leadership at an academic conference.

Step 2A: Measure:

Students will participate in the Guild by attending a number of conferences devoted to the academic field of religious studies.

Linked Documents

[Rubric for GPRS Conference Leadership Scoring.docx](#)

Step 2B: Type of Measure (check all that apply):

Presentation ,Other

Step 2C: Is Measure direct or indirect?:

Direct

Step 3A: Target for Measure:

90% of MA students in Religious Studies presented a paper, served on a panel, or otherwise provided leadership at least once at a local, regional, or national conference devoted to the academic field of religious studies.

Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?:

No data collected/reported this cycle (provided explanation in Step 4B)

Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:

No students were enrolled in this program.

Step 4C: Interpretation of Results:

No students were enrolled in this program.

Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan):

No students were enrolled in this program. The faculty will be working toward developing SMART program-level student learning outcomes for the 24-25 AY using the attached rubric as a guide.

Step 5B: Type of Action:

No action - New/low-enrolled program

Step 5C: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply):

Administrator

Step 5D: Evidence of Dialogue:

No students were enrolled in this program.

Step 5E: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):

Other

Step 5F: Other Improvements (Full Description):

No students were enrolled in this program.

Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

No students were enrolled in this program.

Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s):

Not applicable for this cycle (explain in Step 6A)

Progress:

Complete

Placement of Graduates

Step 1A: PG Number:

1

Step 1C: PG Statement (Full Description):

Graduates will secure positions relevant to the field of religious studies upon completion of the program.

Step 2A: Measure:

Through email contact with MA students every 6-12 months, we determine whether they are associated with any institutions, foundations, or associations that are related to the field of religious studies.

Step 2B: Is Measure direct or indirect?:

Direct

Commented [SS5]: Program has very little control over this. I will formulate this differently, something like the department will monitor the career outcomes of their graduates, and will include the desired skills of the field in the courses and curriculum

Suggested Revision:

“The program will equip students with the disciplinary knowledge, research competencies, and professional skills necessary to pursue careers or further academic study in religious studies and related fields.”

If you'd like a more operational/administrative version:

“The program will provide structured academic advising, career preparation resources, and applied learning opportunities that support students' pursuit of careers and graduate study in religious studies and related fields.”

Step 3A: Target for Measure:

Within one year of graduation, 100% of our MA students will find a position.

Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?:

No data collected/reported this cycle (provided explanation in Step 4B)

Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:

No students were enrolled in this program.

Step 4C: Interpretation of Results:

No students were enrolled in this program.

Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan):

No students were enrolled in this program.

Step 5B: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply):

Administrator

Step 5C: Evidence of Dialogue:

No students were enrolled in this program.

Step 5D: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):

Other

Step 5E: Other Improvements (Full Description):

No students were enrolled in this program.

Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

Although no students were enrolled this year in this program, students have been enrolled in and graduated from the program within the past five years. We hope to keep in contact with those students to know of their placement/job history.

Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s):

In progress

Progress:

Complete

