

A MANUAL OF PROCEDURES,
PRINCIPLES, PROTOCOLS, AND POLICIES

pertaining to the

Ph.D. in Theology

at Boston College

Revised November 20, 2025

A MANUAL OF PROCEDURES,
PRINCIPLES, PROTOCOLS, AND POLICIES
pertaining to the

Ph.D. in Theology
at Boston College

P R E A M B L E

1. The Doctorate of Philosophy in Theology is granted by Boston College upon the recommendation of its Theology Department.

The members of the Department who constitute the Doctoral Faculty are responsible, through the structures and procedures set out in this Manual, for offering the doctoral studies that are described here; for admitting applicants to the Ph.D. Program in the Areas of specialization set out below; for setting the requirements to be met by students, overseeing their progress, and judging their successful completion of doctoral work; and for discharging all these responsibilities in keeping with the goals, convictions, and characteristics stated here.

The policies and procedures of Boston College's Morrissey College Graduate School of Arts and Sciences also govern our program and are not duplicated here. Please consult their website at:

<https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/schools/mcas/graduate/current-graduate-students/policies-and-procedures.html>

PRINCIPLES AND ORIENTATIONS

Goals of Ph.D. studies

2. The fundamental goal of graduate education in Theology under this program is to offer intellectual leadership to the academy, the church, and society.
3. The Ph.D. in Theology is intended to equip men and women both for academic vocations and for other ministries such as church and university administration, theological renewal, health care ethics, and other careers for which theological expertise is increasingly seen to be necessary. The courses of study offered towards this degree accordingly aim at nourishing a community of faith, scholarly conversation, research, and teaching that is centered on the appropriation of Christian life and thought, past and present, in ways that contribute to this goal.
4. The Doctoral Faculty endeavors to provide its Ph.D. students with an education which is integrative rather than narrowly specialized; which is set within the context of the Christian churches in all the richness of their ecumenical and confessional diversity and in their relation to contemporary culture; which is itself ‘confessional’ in nature; and for which theology is done as ‘faith seeking understanding.’ Nevertheless, the confessional background or stance of applicants, whether Christian or not, will not of itself influence any decision as to their admission.

Fundamental convictions

5. Theology as a whole is here understood as an enterprise that invites the integration of Christian commitment and participation in communities of faith, with pursuit of the highest standards of academic inquiry. How this invitation might inform those studies which are involved in such an enterprise is a question that is a deliberate component of the inquiry itself.
6. Members of the Theology Department faculty are committed both to the wise appropriation of their theological and doctrinal tradition, and to critical and constructive dialogue with other theological positions and with contemporary culture.
7. Creative theological discussion and specialized research today require serious and in-depth appropriation of the great theological and philosophical heritage of the past, as well as ecumenical, inter-religious, interdisciplinary, and cross-cultural cooperation.
8. While for purposes of this Manual ‘theology’ is understood as including Biblical Studies, Theological Ethics, History of Christianity, Comparative Theology, and Systematic Theology, there is no implication that theology embraces only these areas of inquiry.

Desired Learning Outcomes

9. Students are expected to acquire a rigorous mastery of the Judeo-Christian tradition, enabling them to critically probe the foundations of various theological positions.
10. Students are expected to command the tools and techniques of research particular to their field and to organize and integrate their knowledge in such a way as to make an original contribution to the academic study of theology. They are also expected to engage in ecumenical, inter-religious, interdisciplinary, and cross-cultural academic conversation as appropriate to their discipline.
11. Students are expected to acquire the skills and competencies necessary to present their scholarship to the scholarly community. These include: a) the proper professional etiquette associated with conference participation; b) writing, editing and presenting papers to fit conference expectations; c) delivering conference papers; d) re-working conference papers for eventual publication; e) submitting scholarship for publication in peer-reviewed journals, edited volumes and monographs.
12. Students are expected to acquire the skills and competencies necessary to succeed not only as active scholars but as effective teachers.

F A C U L T Y P R O C E D U R E S

Preliminary note

13. This section states the structures and procedures that pertain to members of the Doctoral Faculty, defined below, both as individuals and in those capacities to which they may be elected or appointed for the service of this Ph.D. program.

Changes in the structures and procedures here stated require a two-thirds majority vote of those members of the Doctoral Faculty who are present and voting at a duly convened meeting of the Theology Department.

Nomenclature

14. Throughout this Manual, the following terms are used and are to be understood with the meanings stated.

Program refers to the whole ensemble of means and methods that have as their end a particular academic degree. Accordingly, this Manual concerns the Ph.D. Program in Theology.

Doctoral Faculty refers to members of the faculty of the Theology Department as defined in §15 below.

Course of study refers principally to a particular lane of the highway that leads to the Ph.D. in Theology. The term stands to *program* as species stands to genus. Within the Ph.D. Program a number of courses of study are available.

Director, used without further specification, refers to the Director of Graduate Studies in the Department.

Area (of Specialization) is the common designation of those sub-disciplines within theology in which students may earn the Ph.D. degree, namely: Biblical Studies, Comparative Theology, Theological Ethics, History of Christianity, and Systematic Theology.

Area is also used to refer to those members of the Doctoral Faculty who, for administrative and other purposes, are identified with one of the sub-disciplines mentioned above.

The course of study through which a student completes requirements for the Ph.D. need not, although it may *de facto*, correspond with only one of the Areas in which Doctoral Faculty members are grouped.

Constitution of the Doctoral Faculty

Membership

15. For all purposes set out in this Manual, the members of the Doctoral Faculty of the Department are deemed to be those full-time members of the Theology Department who have been, or are eligible to be, granted academic tenure at Boston College.

Each member of the Doctoral Faculty is considered as belonging to one Area of specialization, but may be actively involved in more than one.

Tenured and tenure-track faculty of the Gloria L. and Charles I. Clough School of Theology and Ministry are included under “Doctoral Faculty” for the purposes of comprehensive exam boards, and Dissertation Directors and Readers only. They do not participate as voting members in policy matters and ordinarily do not serve as academic advisors for doctoral students prior to the constitution of a comprehensive exam board.

Faculty duties

16. The duties of individual Doctoral Faculty members who choose to be active in one or more of the Areas include: serving on faculty committees and on comprehensive examining boards, setting examination questions, and acting as

advisors to students and as Dissertation Directors and Readers of dissertations, and teaching appropriate courses, including such colloquia as may be prescribed by their respective Areas.

17. The business of the Doctoral Faculty is ordinarily discussed and transacted at meetings of the whole Department of Theology. The Department's meetings are called, and their agenda set, by the Chairperson and Executive Committee of the Department.

Areas of Specialization

Division of Areas

18. The Faculty which serves the doctoral program in Theology is grouped in these Areas: Biblical Studies, Comparative Theology, Theological Ethics, History of Christianity, and Systematic Theology.

The Faculty members associated with each of these Areas offer a course or courses of study leading to the Ph.D.

Changes in Area structure

19. Any reconfiguration of these Areas, and the establishment of any new Area, is subject to the approval of the whole Doctoral Faculty.

20. Any new course of study that cannot be accommodated within the structures and procedures of this Manual must be approved not only by the Boston College Theology Department, but also by the Dean of the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences, the Graduate Dean of the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences, and the Academic Vice President at Boston College. In addition, it must have secured appropriate funding (whether new or through reallocation).

Responsibilities of Areas

21. Within each Area, the course or courses of study prescribed for students seeking the Ph.D. are specified and revised by members of the Area following such procedures as they shall establish, *provided* that the prescriptions in this Manual are met.

Area Conveners

22. Area conveners are chosen by the area faculty in consultation with the department chair. The convener serves either a two or three-year renewable term, depending on the area. Ordinarily, conveners will be chosen from among the tenured faculty in the area. The convener's responsibilities generally include: 1) implementation of policies outlined in the area's manual if it has one, 2) convening

periodic area faculty meetings, 3) the coordination of the admissions process within their area, 4) coordination of comprehensive exams for graduate students in their area, 5) coordination of area colloquia [though the area may choose to delegate this responsibility to another faculty member], 6) ensuring that there is adequate doctoral seminar coverage to meet the needs of graduate students, 7) convening an annual meeting of area faculty to review students' progress toward degree completion, 8) serving on the Dissertation Proposal Review Committee.

Responsibilities in admitting applicants

23. Each Area is responsible for the initial screening of applications for admission to Ph.D. studies in that Area, and for making recommendations to the Faculty Admissions Committee as specified below. The procedure and structures for meeting this responsibility are decided upon by a majority of those Area members present and voting, and are reported to and approved by the Faculty Admissions Committee.

Standing Committees of the Faculty

Committees designated

24. There are two Standing Committees of the Program for Ph.D. in Theology: the Dissertation Proposal Review Committee and the Faculty Admissions Committee.

Constitution of Standing Committees

25. The conveners of the five area faculties (see §22), or their delegates, serve during their term as members of the Dissertation Proposal Review Committee. The chair of the Dissertation Proposal Review Committee, appointed by the Department Chair in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies, serves for one year (see §27). The Faculty Admissions Committee is comprised of a faculty representative from each of the areas plus the Director of Graduate Studies who functions *ex officio*.

Dissertation Proposal Review Committee

Purpose

26. The primary responsibility of the Dissertation Proposal Review Committee [DPRC] is to review and offer consultative feedback on dissertation proposals. The committee establishes separate deadlines for submission of dissertation proposals by students sitting during each comprehensive exams period. For doctoral students enrolled before the academic year 2026-2027, normally the deadlines are: February 15 for fall exams; April 15 for winter exams; and October 15 for spring exams. For doctoral students enrolled in the academic year 2026-2027 and onward, the deadlines follow each comprehensive period, normally, October 15 (fall session) and February

15 (spring session). The committee will offer comments on each dissertation proposal regarding its clarity and cogency and make suggestions about other matters of scholarship. The committee should communicate any responses to the proposal in writing to the student, the student's Dissertation Director, and the Director of Graduate Studies. The DPRC's comments should be discussed by the student with the Dissertation Director and Readers.

Constitution

27. The committee consists of the conveners of the five area faculties or their delegates. They must be associate or full professors, elected by tenured faculty and serving staggered two-year terms. The department chair appoints the chair of the committee in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies.

Faculty Admissions Committee

Purpose

28. Students are admitted to Ph.D. studies, and are awarded University Fellowships and tuition remission, by the Graduate School of the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences, acting upon the recommendation of the Director of Graduate Studies. In presenting this recommendation, the Director of Graduate Studies follows the decisions of the Faculty Admissions Committee.

Procedures in general

29. The Director of Graduate Studies calls the meetings of the Committee ascertaining in advance that all the members can be present.

30. A majority vote of the committee membership suffices for all its decisions.

Procedures in particular

31. The Faculty Admissions Committee requests and receives from each of the Areas a ranked list of applicants who, in the judgment of the Area faculty, are worthy of admission to Ph.D. studies. After reviewing those applications which have been referred to it by the Areas, the Committee shall determine a list of applicants to recommend for admission. The maximum number of applicants that the Committee may recommend for admission, with University Fellowship and tuition-remission, will be communicated by the Director of Graduate Studies in keeping with directives from the Graduate School of the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences.

32. Each Area determines the procedure it will use in selecting applications to be forwarded to the Faculty Admissions Committee.

33. In addition to presenting its recommendations for admission, the committee also creates a waitlist based on the ranked alternates on an area-by-area basis. If the department receives a number of rejections sufficient to take us below the number of positions for which we are fully funded, the Director of Graduate Studies will consult with the Admissions Committee to determine which area waitlist to go to first, giving a limited priority to the area that was hardest hit by rejections.

34. The Committee's decisions are to be communicated by the Director of Graduate Studies, who conveys them to the Graduate School of the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences and, as appropriate, to the applicants.

Restrictions on procedure

35. Exceptions to the policies on admission and financial aid set by the Graduate School of the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences may be made by the Committee only with the permission of the Dean of the School.

36. The Committee will not ordinarily act in such a way as to contradict the rank-order of applicants arrived at and submitted to the Committee by any Area. Should the Committee's judgment differ from that of an Area, the Committee will communicate its reservations to the Area and endeavor to resolve the difficulty by consultation and dialogue. Following such a consultation, it is the Committee's decision that the Director of Graduate Studies will put into effect.

37. In allocating financial aid, the Committee will ordinarily honor any current designation of University Fellowships as intended for students pursuing the Ph.D. in a particular Area or course of studies.

Exceptions to procedures

38. The Committee may in exceptional cases—for example, the case of an applicant who will have completed a bachelor's degree but has not done graduate work in theology or the study of religion—stipulate that an applicant who accepts the offer of admission will add a third year of full-time course work to the usual four semesters.

39. (a) The Committee may, in exceptional cases, accept advanced graduate students by way of transfer from other schools. Students admitted under this provision will be expected to follow all the regulations set out in this Manual, including those regarding language and comprehensive examinations and those set by the applicant's Area, except that the course requirement may be reduced from the normal four semesters to three or, at minimum, two; (b) Under this provision, applicants to the Ph.D. program who have received an S.T.L. from the Boston College Gloria L. and Charles I. Clough School of Theology and Ministry may be accepted with advanced standing, in which case they are deemed to have completed one to two semesters of coursework. Once a student initiates this request, the Director of Graduate Studies in consultation

with the appropriate Area convener will review the case and make a determination, weighing the student's record as well as the values offered by the standard schedule of coursework.

Criteria of admission and funding

40. In reaching its decisions, as regards both admission and funding, the Committee will be guided, in the first instance, by criteria of educational preparation, demonstrated academic achievement, and promise of excellence in theological scholarship. As stated above, the confessional background or stance of applicants, whether Christian or not, will not of itself influence the Committee's decision as to their admission.

41. The Committee will arrive at its decisions without reference to whether applicants have or are likely to have financial support apart from the University Fellowship that ordinarily accompanies admission.

Any offer of financial aid other than the University Fellowship must, for purposes of financial oversight, be approved both by the Chair of the Theology Department, and by the Graduate Dean of Arts and Sciences. Such an offer may be accepted only by an applicant whom the Committee has deemed worthy of admission, on the basis of the criteria stated above, and only if the approval here stipulated has been explicitly given.

42. Without imposing restrictions or requirements in advance, the Committee will be sensitive to the distribution of students among different Areas of specialization, to ecumenical breadth, and diversity as emphasized by the university's nondiscrimination policy: Boston College extends its welcome in particular to those who may be vulnerable to discrimination, on the basis of their race, ethnic or national origin, religion, color, age, gender, marital or parental status, sexual orientation, veteran status or disabilities.

43. It is understood that the foregoing criteria apply equally to those applicants whom the Committee recommends for admission and to those, if any, whom it designates as suitable for admission in case any of those to whom admission has been offered should decline to accept it.

Director of Graduate Studies

Function in general

44. The Director of Graduate Studies provides administrative oversight of Ph.D. studies, including the implementation of decisions made by the two Standing Committees (Admissions and Dissertation Proposal Review).

Functions in particular

45. The Director of Graduate Studies administers the procedures of this Manual, except where otherwise provided; establishes schedules and ensures that they are met; and serves as the liaison between students on the one hand, and the Faculty, its Committees, the Area Conveners, and the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences on the other.

S T U D E N T P R O C E D U R E S

Preliminary Note

46. This section states the structures and procedures that apply to every person studying for the Ph.D. in Theology. Each of the Areas will set further requirements for the corresponding course or courses of study. Ph.D. students are also required to follow the administrative regulations of the Graduate School of the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences at Boston College, as stated in its official publications.

47. Changes in this part of the Manual require a majority vote of those members of the Doctoral Faculty who are present and voting at a duly convened meeting of the Theology Department.

Residence and length of study

Normal requirements

48. Students will ordinarily have taken the M.A. degree in theology or religious studies, the M.Div. degree, or an equivalent. Students will generally take four semesters of full-time study. Part-time students are not accepted. Over the period of four semesters students must take a minimum of twelve courses. If an area requires its students to participate in its area colloquium, that colloquium constitutes a thirteenth course. However, students should be encouraged by their advisors to take additional courses as necessary, with sixteen courses being the maximum for which funding is provided.

Exception: additional residence

49. Students admitted without prior appropriate graduate work in theological studies may be required to add a third year of coursework. Where such an additional requirement is to be a condition of admission to Ph.D. studies, responsibility for initiating it lies with the Faculty Admissions Committee, as provided above.

Exception: Advanced Standing

50. Students who successfully complete all language and comprehensive examinations earlier than the prescribed point in their course of studies may be granted Advanced Standing. Permission to take comprehensive examinations early must be obtained from the Director of Graduate Studies in consultation with the student's advisors.

Advisors

Selection of advisors

51. The Director of Graduate Studies in consultation with the Area Convener will assign to each first-year student a Major Advisor in the Area to which application was made. At any time after the first semester of residence, a student may request that a different member of the same Area serve as his or her Major Advisor, with that Faculty member's agreement and the consent of the Director of Graduate Studies. Every student's Major Advisor must be a member of the Doctoral Faculty as defined in §15.

52. Once a student has decided on a minor area, the student should consult with an appropriate member of the Doctoral Faculty as defined in §15 regarding this minor.

53. Advisors will meet at least annually with their advisees (twice per year until year three) to keep them informed of the requirements they have and have not met, since meeting these requirements is prerequisite to taking comprehensive examinations.

Expectations

54. A student's Major Advisor will ordinarily serve as the chair of his or her comprehensive examination board. The Major Advisor will not, however, necessarily be the student's Dissertation Director.

Course selection and distribution

Comprehensive theological formation

55. There are no common courses required of all doctoral students. The Director of Graduate Studies, however, will arrange for the first-year class at least two cohort meetings in addition to an initial orientation session. These meetings are held for the purpose of introducing the comprehensive scope of academic theology and fostering collegiality among the first-year students and with faculty members. In addition, professional development seminars open to all doctoral students are offered regularly throughout the academic year.

Area requirements

56. Each of the Areas of specialization prescribes the number of courses that must be taken within that Area, and specifies ways in which the remaining courses are to be distributed among the other Areas, including their requirements for formal minors.
57. Any Area may require all students within its purview to enroll in a particular course or courses, including an Area Colloquium. Each Area establishes the content and requirements for its Colloquium. If that colloquium is required, it is not to be counted as one of the minimum twelve courses.
58. All areas will offer a minor consisting of a minimum of three courses to students from other areas.
59. Judgment as to whether a course fulfills a particular requirement lies proximately with the student's Advisor, as appropriate, but must be confirmed by the Convener of the Area concerned and the Director of Graduate Studies.

Boston Theological Interreligious Consortium

60. In any semester, no student may enroll in more than two courses offered at Boston Theological Interreligious Consortium schools, including the Boston College Gloria L. and Charles I. Clough School of Theology and Ministry. This rule is to be construed, however, in terms of the student's overall program over four semesters, and exceptions can be made with the consent of the Director of Graduate Studies.

Foreign Language Requirements

Basic requirement

61. Each Area may augment the departmental requirements with their own specialized requirements, provided that the following conditions are met:
- a) A minimum of two foreign languages is required of all students.
 - b) One of the foreign languages required must be a modern language.
62. A student must have produced documented proficiency in *all* required foreign languages *before* a student may register to take comprehensive examinations.

Demonstration of Proficiency

63. Proficiency in the required languages may be demonstrated by either a) the successful completion of an approved graduate-level language course or b) passing a department foreign language examination.
- a) The examination shall be two and one half hours, one hour and a quarter spent on each of two passages chosen from the examinand's field of

specialization. For each text, one hour should be spent on translating; fifteen minutes on summarizing the general meaning of the text.

- b) The two texts should be about one and one-half pages in length, or 400 words. It will not be expected or required that the student finish the entire passage.
- c) One of the two texts will be at a level of language written for an intelligent non-specialist, ideally perhaps an encyclopedia article. The other of the two texts will offer a technical and scholarly level of discourse.
- d) The student will be allowed a dictionary but no other resources.
- e) The evaluation of the examination will be 85% for translation, 15% for summary of comprehension. The grades will be either pass or fail. If the examiner judges that the student fails, the examiner will give the examination to another colleague competent in the language to confirm their judgment. If they disagree, they will discuss and reach a mutually agreed upon conclusion.
- f) In research languages other than modern western languages and Latin (e.g., Greek, ancient or modern Hebrew, Tamil, Hindi, Chinese, Arabic), examiners in those fields may decide what is an appropriate length of the passage.

64. Alternative ways of demonstrating language proficiency may be approved, either in individual cases or as a matter of policy, by the Area concerned.

Additional requirements

65. In cases where a student's dissertation topic calls for it, proficiency in an additional language or languages may be required. Such further requirements are set by the student's Major Area, in consultation with his or her Major Advisor.

Administration of examinations

66. Language examinations are administered on a regular schedule by the office of the Director of Graduate Studies as requested by students.

Teaching experience and service

67. Hiring and promotion in higher education today are guided by three considerations: *teaching, research and writing, and service.*

Accordingly, the Ph.D. Program in Theology is committed to preparing its students, not only for research and writing, but also for participation as academic professionals. The chief means to this end is the inclusion of teaching assistantships and fellowships

as integral components of the Program. This service, in addition to its value as training for future teaching, provides material for letters of recommendation. Further information on department's culture of teaching formation is located on the website of the Ph.D. program of the Theology Department.

The Theology Department is committed to producing first-rate scholars and accomplished teachers. Before defending their dissertations, doctoral students enrolled before the academic year 2026-2027 are expected to complete the full Certificate in College Teaching (Tier 2) offered by the Boston College Center for Teaching Excellence. For doctoral students enrolled in the academic year 2026-2027 and onward, the training in teaching pedagogy through Boston College's Certificate in College Teaching (Tier 2) is optional.

For doctoral students enrolled before the academic year 2026-2027, the Theology doctoral students' fellowships include the requirement that they serve as teaching assistants for four semesters (in their second and third year or third and fourth year). The Catholic Health Care track replaces one year of service as teaching assistant.

For doctoral students enrolled in the academic year 2026-2027 and onward, the Theology doctoral students' fellowships include the requirement that they serve as teaching assistants for two semesters in their second year. The Catholic Health Care track replaces the year of service as teaching assistant.

For doctoral students enrolled before the academic year 2026-2027, the Theology doctoral students' fellowships include the requirement that they serve as teaching fellows during their fifth year, responsible as teachers of record for two semester-long undergraduate Theology core courses.

For doctoral students enrolled in the academic year 2026-2027 and onward, the fourth-year and fifth-year stipends carry the requirement that they serve as teaching fellows, responsible as teachers of record for four semester-long undergraduate Theology core courses. These four semester-long undergraduate Theology core courses can be taught, alternatively: (1) in year four; (2) in year five; (3) two courses in year four and two courses in year five. The decision regarding these three options should be made with the Director of Graduate Studies and communicated to the Department Chair before October 1st of year three of the Ph.D. program.

The Director of Graduate Studies works with the Department Chair in monitoring and evaluating each student's teaching performance. Sub-standard performance may result in the loss of the student's stipend.

Comprehensive examinations

General provisions

68. All students pursuing the Ph.D. in Theology must pass a set of written examinations (normally twelve hours), followed by a two-hour oral or *viva voce* examination.
69. Comprehensive examinations are ordinarily taken in the third year of studies, during one of the exam periods designated by the Office of the Director of Graduate Studies. Only students in good standing may schedule these examinations. Good standing is defined below (§98) and includes the completion of any unfinished coursework and required demonstration of proficiency in languages, as provided above.
70. These exams are based on reading lists approved by each student's major and minor areas, as verified by the signature of the student's major and minor area conveners on the comprehensive exam application form, due a month before the exam.
71. Each area determines the form and nature of its exams and reading lists. Students should receive any preset lists and/or receive guidance to begin the process of building their own lists and fulfilling associated requirements for both their major and their minor areas with their matriculation.

Exam Structure

72. Normally, comprehensive exams will include twelve hours of written exams over three days, divided between the student's major and minor areas. The precise number, form, and content of the written examinations are set by the student's major and minor areas of specialization, according to regulations established by these areas, acting through their Conveners.
73. The minor will normally be represented by a three-hour exam within the student's twelve hours of comprehensive exams. The specific length of this minor exam may be adjusted to accommodate the structure of the student's major comprehensive examinations:
- Ethics majors likely will require a two-hour minor exam because of the area's exam structure;
 - Comparative Theology majors likely will require a four-hour minor exam because of the role of the minor in the student's comparative work;
 - Bible majors take an internally administered minor exam in the "other" testament.

74. The chair of the comprehensive exam board determines which faculty are responsible for crafting which part of the exams. The faculty member from the student's minor area will write the relevant exam question(s).

75. The student's major area convener is responsible for collecting all of the questions and submitting them to the Graduate Program Assistant a week before the exams, with clear designation of which exam is to be administered on which day, in what order, for how long, and what, if any, aids are permitted. The Graduate Program Assistant administers the exams, beginning at standardized times on the set days.

Board of examiners

76. The student's written examinations will be read and adjudicated by a board of at least four members, one of whom must be the student's Major Advisor. Any Area may, and some Areas do, allow or require five examiners. This board also conducts the student's oral or *viva voce* examination.

77. The members of the board of examiners, other than the Major Advisor, are assigned in consultation with the Major Advisor, the student, and the Area Convener who ordinarily takes into account (1) the student's minor area, (2) the student's stated preferences, and (3) the availability of Faculty members during the period designated for comprehensive examinations. Details of the examination procedure and application forms are made available by the Director of Graduate Studies' office.

78. The student's Major Advisor ordinarily chairs the board of examiners, so long as the Major Advisor is a member of the Theology Department (See §15 regarding participation of tenured and tenure-track faculty of the STM).

The board may not include more than two examiners from outside of the Doctoral Faculty. Any examiners other than Doctoral Faculty members must be tenured or tenure-eligible faculty members of *either* a Boston College department besides Theology, *or* of a Boston College graduate school other than the Graduate School of the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences.

In exceptional circumstances the Director of Graduate Studies may appoint to the board one scholar who is either not a member of any Boston College faculty or who serves as a Professor of the Practice in Theology.

Grades of performance

79. The comprehensive examination board may assign the student's performance in written and oral examinations, taken together, to one of two categories: *pass*, or *fail*. This decision requires a majority vote, that is, three of the four (or five) board members. As a matter of *internal* policy (as distinct from the general policy of the

Graduate School of the Morrissey College Arts and Sciences) the Doctoral Faculty does not grant the grade *pass with distinction*.

Terminal M.A. degree

80. In case the board of examiners decides by majority vote that the student has not earned a passing grade on the comprehensive examinations, they will at the time of the *viva voce* examination determine, by majority vote, whether his or her performance overall is such as to merit awarding a terminal M.A. degree, provided the minimum requirements set by the Graduate School of the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences have been met.

Repetition of examination

81. A student who has failed comprehensive examinations may request, as of right, to take all examinations, written and oral, a second time. This second set of exams must be taken during the next designated examination period.

82. Ordinarily, the board of examiners for a second comprehensive examination will be the same as for the first. Authority to change the membership rests with the Director of Graduate Studies.

83. A student who fails twice to pass comprehensive examinations may no longer continue in doctoral studies. The examination board will decide whether a terminal M.A. degree may be awarded.

Exceptions

84. In exceptional cases, when the members of the examination board judge that a student has passed all the written examinations but one, they may offer the student the option of taking that examination, only, a second time. In that case a second *viva voce* examination before the same examiners will follow the further written examination. Failure to pass these further examinations puts an end to the student's doctoral studies, and the examination board will decide at once whether the student's overall performance merits awarding a terminal M.A.

Dissertation

Basic requirement

85. After completing residence, demonstrating proficiency in the appropriate languages, and passing comprehensive examinations, each student will write a doctoral dissertation.

Dissertation committee

86. Successful completion of the dissertation will be judged by a dissertation committee of three members, one of whom serves as the Dissertation Director.

Ordinarily the Dissertation Director, who chairs the dissertation committee, is a member of the Doctoral Faculty as defined in §15. Of the other two members, at least one must be a tenured or tenure-eligible member of the Doctoral Faculty. However, a student may petition the Director of Graduate Studies to allow a professor of the practice or a scholar from another university to serve on a dissertation committee. Ordinarily one scholar from another university will be the limit.

Subject to these provisions, the membership of the committee may, at the discretion of the Director of Graduate Studies, be augmented by one or, at most, two members.

It is the responsibility of the student to assemble a committee that meets these requirements and to justify in writing any members of the committee from outside the doctoral faculty or beyond the required three committee members in order to secure from the Director of Graduate Studies approval of the committee. In accordance with the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences policy, the Director of Graduate Studies will also request from the Dean of the Graduate School of the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences confirmation of any committees including outside members. Subsequent modifications of a dissertation committee must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies, and as appropriate, the Dean.

Dissertation proposal: purpose and form

87. Together with his or her dissertation committee, the student will write a proposal for the dissertation. The dissertation proposal should be succinct—not more than five thousand words (including footnotes but excluding the bibliography). It should be crafted so as to be clear and cogent to persons who are trained in the academic study of theology without necessarily being experts in the specialized subject matter of the dissertation.

88. The proposal shall include at least these elements:

- a delineation of the *scope* of the project, together with a clear and concise *thesis statement*;
- a preliminary indication of how the overall argument will unfold;
- an account of the dissertation's relation to existing work in the field, and how it will contribute to the current state of scholarship;
- an explanation of the approach and methods that will be used;
- a concrete assessment of the project's feasibility in relation to library and other resources available to the student;

-
- evidence of the student's competence in the relevant *languages* of scholarship; and
 - sufficient evidence of the student's preliminary and current research, including without being limited to a bibliography.

89. Sample proposals will be kept on file in the office of the Director of Graduate Studies. These are understood to be suggestive rather than prescriptive models.

Dissertation proposal: procedure for approval

90. The members of the (proposed) dissertation committee shall meet together with the student to discuss the proposal. Having agreed among themselves that the proposal is acceptable, they shall sign a statement to that effect, conveying in writing to the Director of Graduate Studies their agreement to serve as Dissertation Director and Readers of the proposed dissertation. The written proposal as they have approved it is to be included with the statement and forwarded to the chair of the Dissertation Proposal Review Committee for review. The final date for this submission is dependent upon when students enrolled and when passed their comprehensive exams. For doctoral students enrolled before the academic year 2026-2027, normally the deadlines are: February 15 for fall exams; April 15 for winter exams; and October 15 for spring exams. For doctoral students enrolled in the academic year 2026-2027 and onward, the deadlines to submit their dissertation proposal are, normally: February 15 (for doctoral students who have taken their comprehensive exams on October 15) and May 15 (for doctoral students who have taken their comprehensive exams on February 15).

91. The Director of Graduate Studies is responsible for seeing that the Dissertation Proposal Review Committee has timely opportunity to review the proposal. The Committee will offer consultative feedback on the proposal in accordance with the basic standard of clarity and cogency defined in §87 above.

Dissertation proposal: effect

92. Once the student's dissertation committee has approved and the Dissertation Proposal Review Committee has reviewed the proposal, it is understood that the student will write such a dissertation as has been proposed and that writing and defending it completes his or her work towards the degree. With the express consent of the Dissertation Director, however, modifications of the dissertation project may be made, provided they fall within the general framework proposed. Major changes from the dissertation proposal require the written approval of the Dissertation Director and Readers, as well as the Director of Graduate Studies in consultation with the Dissertation Proposal Review Committee.

Limitations as to time

93. Students who have completed all requirements for the Ph.D. except the dissertation must still conform to the regulations concerning registration set by the Graduate School of the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences at Boston College. The Graduate School also requires that dissertations be submitted for defense within eight years of the student's entrance into the program (students who were enrolled in the spring of 2020 have been granted one additional year to redress the effect of the covid pandemic on their studies). Extensions may be granted only for the most exceptional of circumstances and then only with the approval of a) the Director of Graduate Studies and b) the Dissertation Director, contingent upon evidence that the student has produced preliminary evidence of scholarship in their dissertation commensurate with the standards of the department and that both the Director of Graduate Studies and the Dissertation Director are confident that the dissertation could be completed within the period allowed for by the extension.

Submission of dissertation

94. When the dissertation is complete, it is to be submitted to the Doctoral Faculty through the Director of Graduate Studies, together with a one-page abstract of its contents. The Director of Graduate Studies' office will arrange for copies of the dissertation and the abstract to be available for the inspection of Faculty members. At least thirty days must be allowed between submission of the dissertation and abstract, and the date of the public defense.

Public defense

95. The form of the public defense of the candidate's dissertation will be agreed upon with the dissertation committee, but in each case an abstract of the dissertation is to be distributed at the defense, and there must be opportunity for members of the public to question the candidate.

96. The time and place of the public defense are to be communicated to the Department when the dissertation is submitted; that is, at least thirty days in advance. Ordinarily the Dissertation Director presides at the defense. Faculty are not required to be available for a summer dissertation defense.

97. At the conclusion of the public defense, the members of the dissertation committee certify their acceptance by electronically signing the form prescribed by the Graduate School of the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences.

Evaluation of students

Good standing defined

98. Students are deemed to be in good standing in their courses of study towards the Ph.D. unless one of these conditions obtains:

- Average grade in courses is lower than B+ (3.33 where A is 4 and B is 3).
- Rules established by the Boston College Graduate School regarding grades of I (incomplete) have not been met. (See Academic Regulations, under “The University: Policies and Procedures,” in *The Boston College Catalog*.)
- Comprehensive examinations have not been taken by June 1 of the first academic year following the student’s final year of course work.
- A dissertation proposal has not been submitted to the DGS and the DPRC by the assigned due date. The proposal must be accompanied by the signatures of its director and readers, indicating that they have accepted the proposal.

Monitoring of student work

99. The Director of Graduate Studies is proximately responsible for monitoring the progress of Ph.D. students, especially in the matter of grades, incomplete courses, and comprehensive examinations. The Director of Graduate Studies will issue stated policies, consistent with this Manual, regarding the consequences of inadequate work on the part of students.

100. It is expected that a student’s Major Advisor, and other Faculty members, will take responsibility for reporting to the Director of Graduate Studies any indications that a student’s good standing may be in jeopardy.

Review of students with deficiencies

101. The case of any student, who is not in good standing, as defined above, is subject to formal review by the Director of Graduate Studies in consultation with the student’s Major Advisor and the Department Chair.

Probation

102. A student not in good standing may be placed on probation for one semester, during which time it is expected that all deficiencies will be remedied and no new deficiencies incurred. The Director of Graduate Studies will notify in writing both the student and his or her Major Advisor that probation is being imposed.

Interruption of financial support

103. During the probationary semester, the student on probation is liable to interruption of his or her financial aid, if any. The decision to withhold stipends rests

with the Director of Graduate Studies. The Director of Graduate Studies may stipulate that resumption or continuation of a stipend is contingent upon the student's removing specific deficiencies within a specified time.

Possibility of extension

104. The probationary period may be extended beyond a semester, if in the judgment of the Director of Graduate Studies, substantial progress towards remedying deficiencies is being made, or if extraordinary circumstances warrant an extension.

Dismissal from Ph.D. studies

105. A student who fails to meet stated expectations during the probationary period is liable to dismissal from doctoral studies by the Director of Graduate Studies upon appropriate consultation. Opportunity will in that case be provided for the student to be awarded a terminal M.A. degree.

106. The Director of Graduate Studies will notify the student in writing, stating the grounds for dismissal. Copies of this notification will be filed with the Dean of the Boston College Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.