

A MANUAL OF PROCEDURES,
PRINCIPLES, PROTOCOLS, AND POLICIES

pertaining to the

Ph.D. in Theology

at Boston College

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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.

P R I N C I P L E S A N D O R I E N T A T I O N S

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, Historical Theology/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 Christian tradition, and any other tradition pertinent to their program of study, 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 simple 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, Historical Theology/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 School of Theology and Ministry are included under “Doctoral Faculty” for the purposes of comprehensive exam boards, and dissertation supervisors 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 supervisors 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, Historical Theology/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.

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. Members of the Dissertation Proposal Review Committee serve a two-year term. The Faculty Admissions Committee is comprised of a faculty representative from each of the Areas plus the Graduate Director who functions *ex officio*.

Dissertation Proposal Review Committee

Purpose

26. The primary responsibility of the Dissertation Proposal Review Committee [DPRC] is to assess dissertation proposals. The committee establishes deadlines, ordinarily one in the fall [September 30] and one in the spring [April 1], for the submission of dissertation proposals. The committee will review each dissertation proposal to ensure that it meets the department's standard for research scholarship and is marked by clarity and cogency. A proposal that the committee believes requires revision must be returned to the student within 30 days of the due date. If a student receives from the committee a request for revisions, the student has 30 days to re-submit the revised proposal. The DPRC then must respond to the resubmission within a further 30 days. The committee should communicate any concerns regarding the proposal in writing to the student, the student's director/dissertation committee and the Director of Graduate Studies. No proposal may move forward without approval of the DPRC.

Constitution

27. The committee consists of three members who 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 follows the decisions of the Faculty Admissions Committee.

Procedures in general

29. The Director 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 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 Graduate Director 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 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 Graduate Director 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 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 advisor 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 advisor.

Advisors

Selection of advisor

51. The Director of Graduate Studies in consultation with the Area Convener will assign to each first-year student an 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 Advisor, with that Faculty member's agreement and the consent of the Director of Graduate Studies. Every student's advisor must be a member of the Doctoral Faculty as defined in §15.

Expectations

52. A student's Advisor will ordinarily serve as the chair of his or her comprehensive examination board. The Advisor will not, however, necessarily be the student's dissertation supervisor.

Course selection and distribution

Comprehensive theological formation

53. 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

54. 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.

55. 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.

56. 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 them is prerequisite to taking comprehensive examinations.

57. Judgments as to whether a particular course fulfills a particular requirement lie proximately with the student's Advisor, but must be confirmed by the Convener of the Area concerned and the Director of Graduate Studies.

Boston Theological Interreligious Consortium

58. In any semester, no student may enroll in more than two courses offered at Boston Theological Interreligious Consortium schools, including the Boston College 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

59. 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.
60. Student must have produced documented proficiency in *all* required foreign languages, *before* a student may register to take comprehensive examinations.

Demonstration of Proficiency

61. Proficiency in the required languages may be demonstrated by either a) the successful completion of an approved 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.
62. 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

63. 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 Area, in consultation with his or her Advisor.

Administration of examinations

64. 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

65. 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 PhD program of the Theology Department.

Theology doctoral students are awarded fellowships for serving as teaching assistants in their second and third years. In the fifth year, teaching fellowships are awarded to doctoral students who teach one undergraduate Core course in each semester. 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. The Theology Department is committed to producing not only first-rate scholars but also accomplished teachers. Consequently, all students, beginning with the class of 2013-14, are expected to complete the *Apprenticeship in College Teaching Certificate* through the Connors Family Learning Center. This certificate must be completed before a student defends his or her dissertation.

Comprehensive examinations

General provisions

66. All students pursuing the Ph.D. in Theology must pass a set of written examinations, followed by a *viva voce* examination.

67. The number, form, and content of the written examinations are set by the student's Area of specialization, acting through its Convener, according to regulations established by the Area.

68. Comprehensive examinations are ordinarily taken in the third year of studies, during one of the periods designated by the Office of the Director of Graduate Studies. No student may schedule these examinations who is not in good standing, as defined below (§91), which includes the completion of any unfinished coursework. In addition, proficiency in languages, as provided above, must be demonstrated before comprehensive examinations may be scheduled.

Board of examiners

69. 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 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.

70. The members of the board of examiners, other than the Advisor, are assigned in consultation with the Advisor, the student, and the Area Convener who ordinarily takes into account (1) the requirements of the student's Area regarding studies outside that 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's office.

71. The student's Advisor ordinarily chairs the board of examiners, so long as the 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 who are not members 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, with the consent of the Dissertation Proposal Review Committee, may appoint to the board one scholar who is not a member of any Boston College faculty.

Grades of performance

72. 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

73. 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

74. 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.

75. 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.

76. 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

77. 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

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

Dissertation committee

79. Successful completion of the dissertation will be judged by a dissertation committee of three members, one of whom serves as the Supervisor.

Ordinarily the Supervisor, 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 Graduate Director to allow a professor of the practice to serve on a dissertation committee. With the approval of the Dissertation Proposal Review Committee, one member may be a scholar from another university. Ordinarily one outside scholar 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, to secure any approvals required, and to notify the Director. The composition of the committee must be approved—ordinarily, at the same time as the student’s dissertation proposal—by the Dissertation Proposal Review Committee, and confirmed by the Dean of the Graduate School of the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences. Subsequent modifications of the dissertation committee must be approved by the Dissertation Proposal Review Committee.

Dissertation proposal: purpose and form

80. 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.

81. 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

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- sufficient evidence of the student's preliminary and current research, including without being limited to a bibliography.

82. 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

83. 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 their agreement to serve as Supervisor and readers of the proposed dissertation. The written proposal as they have approved it is to be included with the statement and forwarded by the Director to the Dissertation Proposal Review Committee for review.

84. The Director is responsible for seeing that the Dissertation Proposal Review Committee has timely opportunity to review the proposal. The Committee will evaluate the proposal to ensure that it meets a basic standard of clarity and cogency as defined in §80 above.

Dissertation proposal: effect

85. Once the student's dissertation committee and the Dissertation Proposal Review Committee have approved 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 Supervisor, however, modifications of the dissertation project may be made, provided they fall within the general framework proposed. Major changes in the dissertation proposal require the written approval of the Dissertation Proposal Review Committee. Such changes should be proposed in writing, with the dissertation committee's consent.

Limitations as to time

86. 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 and stated in its catalogue. The Graduate School also requires that dissertations be submitted for defense within eight years of the student's entrance into the program. 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 DGS and the dissertation director are confident that the dissertation could be completed within the period allowed for by the extension.

Submission of dissertation

87. 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's 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

88. The form of the public defense of the candidate's dissertation will be agreed upon with the dissertation committee, but in any 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.

89. 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 Supervisor presides at the defense. Faculty are not required to be available for a summer dissertation defense.

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

Evaluation of students

Good standing defined

91. 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 by September 30 of the second academic year following the student's final year of course work, and approved by the Dissertation Proposal Review Committee by December 15 of the same year.

Monitoring of student work

92. 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 will issue stated policies, consistent with this Manual, regarding the consequences of inadequate work on the part of students.

93. It is expected that a student's Advisor, and other Faculty members, will take responsibility for reporting to the Director any indications that a student's good standing may be in jeopardy.

Review of students with deficiencies

94. 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 Advisor and the Department Chair.

Probation

95. 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 Advisor that probation is being imposed.

Interruption of financial support

96. 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. The Director 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

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

Dismissal from Ph.D. studies

98. A student who fails to meet stated expectations during the probationary period is liable to dismissal from doctoral studies, upon a formal majority vote of the Dissertation Proposal Review Committee ratifying the Director's judgment. Opportunity will in that case be provided for the student to be awarded a terminal M.A. degree.

99. Upon ratification by the Dissertation Proposal Review Committee of the Director's judgment that a student is to be dismissed, the Director 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.

Please note:

GSAS site links to academic university or school policies and procedures:

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