

Harvard University
Committee on the Study of Religion

Handbook for Ph.D. students

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Reference Sheet

CSR Administrative Roles

AY 2023-2024

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Common Terms and Abbreviations

Committee of the Study of Religion	CSR
CSR Standing Committee	Standing Committee
Doctoral Subcommittee	DocSub
CSR Administration Staff	CSR Admin
Griffin Graduate School of Arts & Sciences	GSAS
Faculty of Arts and Sciences	FAS
Harvard Divinity School	HDS

Introduction

This handbook is a guide for doctoral students, their advisors, and the administrative staff in the Committee on the Study of Religion. Because our program falls under a “committee,” there are many specific processes to which everyone contributes during students’ academic progress. Below, we have outlined the responsibilities entrusted to students, faculty, and staff as a navigation tool to prepare a student for coursework, teaching, language requirements, general exams, and dissertation writing. Many requirements are determined by GSAS, rather than the CSR, and those requirements will be indicated.

We have spent time anticipating your administrative needs by putting together this handbook. For questions, concerns, or clarification please contact the Student Coordinator or closest relative staff within the CSR, and we will be happy to assist. We are glad to have you as a member of the CSR community.

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Guidelines for Advising and Mentoring Doctoral Students:

Advising doctoral students is one of the most crucial aspects of our work, as teachers and scholars. This document is meant to establish general guidelines or best practices for the advisor/doctoral-student relationship as a set of mutual or shared responsibilities. This section was developed in conversations among members of the Doctoral Subcommittee, which includes doctoral student representatives. More broadly, fellow students in the program have provided input as well.

Entering doctoral students may request a specific advisor, often a faculty member indicated on the student's application *and* based on their indicated area of specialization. By the time of their general exams, we encourage students to have selected three faculty to make up their advising trio. Doctoral students can and should request a change of advisor if the need arises, and all students are encouraged to work with as many faculty members in their field as possible.

The primary responsibilities of an advisor are:

- (a) to counsel the student toward laying foundations (through course work and seminars) for more independent work in their area of specialization, and
- (b) to help ensure specialized studies stay within the general context of the study of religion.

A faculty advisor participates in a student's second year reviews, often chairs the examining committee for general exams, works with students to formulate a prospectus, and directs the writing of the student's dissertation.

Academic Advising

Advisors meet with their doctoral students—especially those pre-dissertation—a minimum of three times per semester, for at least an hour each meeting. These are customarily spaced out at beginning, midpoint, and end of the semester. For students working elsewhere who have easy access to phone or email, the same general guidelines for contact hours apply.

Advisors remain in contact with doctoral students as above during periods of leave.

While advising first- and second-year doctoral students, special attention is paid to course choice. Coursework selections should be general enough to provide context for the students' special area(s) of interest. Selections should also be specific enough to guide the student toward both general examination fields and workable dissertation topics. Advisors also help ensure students meet their language and general course requirements in a timely fashion.

While advising third-year students, advisors should pay special attention to helping the student assemble a committee for general examinations.

For post-general students, advisors provide timely reading substantial commenting on drafts of the dissertation prospectus and all subsequent chapters. Timely here means within four weeks of submission. Advisors also counsel students on seeking employment, from reading drafts of applications letters to commenting on writing samples/job talks, and furthermore introducing students to scholars in their field (at conferences and seminars).

Students must make requests for recommendation letters at least three weeks in advance of the deadline; Advisors who write and submit those recommendation letters must do so in a timely fashion.

Mentoring about Teaching

Mentoring doctoral students specifically in teaching is an extremely important part of the advisor's (and other faculty members') role. Faculty meet with all Teaching Fellows (TFs) for at least one hour per week to discuss the course materials and provide instruction and feedback regarding good pedagogy. Ideally, such meetings are run as small seminars, allowing TFs to think through the intellectual issues raised by the course with the instructor, to read beyond the syllabus as necessary, and to reflect upon engaging students in class discussion of material.

Overview & Timeline

Students are expected to complete the Ph.D. in five to seven years. Only in unusual cases can the program be completed in less than four-and-a-half academic years. The following is an overview of the program, organized by years and expected respective milestones.

Years 1 & 2: Coursework, Languages, and 2nd Year Review

Full time study is required during years one and two, which means 4 courses (16 credits) each term with a minimum of a “B” grade average. Students in the Ph.D. program register for courses through the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS). Courses pertinent to their different areas of study may be found in other departments and schools in the Harvard University catalog. Courses not designated with an FAS course number may be available for cross-registration. For tuition requirements, see [Griffin GSAS Policies](#) or [Griffin GSAS PhD Degree Funding](#).

Courses required for specialization:

- Common Seminars: Religion 2001 (first term) and Religion 2002 (fourth term)
- Two additional courses outside the area of specialization
- Two languages other than English relevant to their studies
- Additional languages (as required for specialization)
- [The Second Year Review](#) (end of fourth term)

Years 3: General Examinations & Student Teaching

- Student teaching is guaranteed for .4 FTE per term (two traditional course sections) for 4 terms
- General Examinations are to be completed by the end of the 6th term

Years 4: Dissertation Prospectus

- To be completed within 12 months of taking of the General Exams

Years 5 and Following: The Dissertation

- After approval of the prospectus, students must submit one chapter per year to their advisors
- To be completed, normally, by the end of the seventh year

GSAS Satisfactory Progress Requirements

All students in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences must be making satisfactory progress in order to qualify for any type of financial aid. The following five provisions outline “satisfactory progress.”

Program-specific modifications follow in [Requirements in Detail](#).

1. During the first two years of graduate study, any student who has completed expected requirements is considered to be making satisfactory progress.*
2. In each of the first two years a student must have achieved the minimum grade-point average required by this faculty, a B average (3.0) (see [Griffin GSAS Grade and Examination Requirements](#)).
3. By the end of the third year, a student must have passed general examinations or the departmental equivalent.
4. By the end of the fourth year, a student must have obtained approval of a dissertation prospectus or its departmental equivalent.
5. By the end of the fifth year and each subsequent year during which a student is allowed to register, he or she must have produced at least one acceptable chapter of the dissertation.

*A student anticipating an INC grace should notify the Director of Graduate Studies and the Director of Administration *as soon as possible* to ensure satisfactory progress within the program.

Communicating with Students in the CSR

Often, the Director of Administration, Graduate Student Coordinator, Student Coordinator, and the Staff Assistant communicate with CSR doctoral students. CSR Administration often communicate through the Graduate Student Newsletter and department-wide emails.

These communications include circulation of job postings, professional development opportunities, and event notices. It is students’ responsibility to update their own personal information in my.harvard, and to update their primary contact email address (if necessary) with CSR staff. Only FAS- or Harvard-issued email addresses will be used thereby for communication.

Petitions for Extensions

If a student anticipates they will be unable to fulfill any of these steps within the specified or expected time period, they must submit a written petition for an extension (countersigned by their advisor) to the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). Once beyond their seventh year, the student must petition annually for more time in the program. Extensions will not be granted past the student’s tenth year.

After their seventh year in the program, students who are unable to present evidence of progress on their dissertation, or who assume professional commitments out of residence that prevent them from sustaining progress on it, may be asked to either (1) apply for a leave of absence or (2) if the limitations on leave time have been reached, to withdraw from the program. In the latter instance, if the withdrawn student subsequently completes the dissertation out of residence or is able to return to full-time resident study, they may be re-admitted into the program. This re-admission is at the discretion of the student’s advisor and DocSub.

Failure to maintain satisfactory progress in the program may result in being placed on “grace” or “unsatisfactory” status. This can impact financial support. If the student cannot rectify these deficiencies, they may be required to withdraw from the program. These determinations will be made in consultation with the student’s advisor and DocSub, who routinely reviews student progress.

Non-Resident Status

There are three statuses students may use to apply to register for an academic term/year with non-resident status. Each of these options have different conditions, so students should confer with their primary advisors and their financial aid officers about:

1. **Traveling scholar**
Students outside the Boston-area engaged primarily in degree-related work.
2. **Leave of Absence (LOA)**
Degree candidates whose time will be devoted primarily to work unrelated to their degree.
3. **Studying at another Harvard School**
Degree candidates registered in another Harvard school.

Requirements in Detail

Years 1 & 2: Plan of Study, Coursework, Languages, and Second Year Review

Plan of Study

By November of their first academic term, doctoral students must complete a Plan of Study, in consultation with their advisor. Students must submit their Plan of Study to CSR Administration by completing the [Microsoft Form: Plan of Study](#).

Coursework

Full-time study during the first two years with a minimum average grade of B is required. Full-time study is defined as 16 credits per term, traditionally 4 courses at 4 credits each).

This section outlines the minimum coursework required for at least the first two years of study. The doctoral program combines coursework within and outside a student's specialization to maintain a degree of balance across their plan of study. At the same time, this design serves to help the student prepare for the Theory and Methods portion of their later-required General Examination.

Students' course requirements constitute the following:

Specialization Studies

The program expects students to satisfactorily complete all basic courses needed to lay the foundation for advanced work. This includes classical languages within their area of specialization. These basic courses will vary from person to person, field to field. Students are asked to participate in the activities of their fields, particularly the colloquia.

Common Seminars

1. **Religion 2001: The Cultural History of the Study of Religion** (Year 1)
2. **Religion 2002: Contemporary Conversations in the Study of Religion** (Year 2)

If the faculty instructor(s) of either REL 2001 or REL 2002 believe a doctoral student may face problems performance-wise during the course of the semester, instructors are expected to follow the sequence below:

- a. Give the student both written and oral warning about unsatisfactory academic performance in a timely way (i.e. as soon as there are serious concerns).
- b. Contact the student's primary faculty advisor to discuss their concerns.
- c. In consultation with the student and the advisor (and CSR chair, if necessary) general concrete guidelines in writing must address the perceived issue, with steps to improve performance in the seminar. These written guidelines must be made available to all concerned. They must also contain a reasonable time frame by which the perceived issue must be resolved.

Should the student fail to improve performance within the agreed-upon timeframe, to the degree that the instructor doubts the student can continue as an enrolled member of the seminar, alternatives should be considered (e.g. taking the seminar a different year or more drastically, reconsider continuing in the

doctoral program). There must be an independent review of the instructor's assessment by the Doctoral Sub-Committee before the student is compelled to withdraw from the seminar.

Additional Coursework Outside of Specialization

In addition to courses related to their specialization, doctoral students are required to satisfactorily complete (a minimum) of two additional courses *outside* of that specialization. These are normally in another tradition, geographical-historical complex, or methodology than the student's primary focus. Both courses should be in the same area and completed before the student takes their General Examinations.

Guidelines on Religion 3000, 3001, 3002, & 3003

3000-level courses are designed for students who have completed beyond their required coursework to ensure they can still register for 16 credits each term until they successfully complete the program. This is a GSAS requirement.

The options include:

- When a student has already done substantial advanced work, they may register for between 4 – 16 credits per semester of **Religion 3001: Reading and Research**. This requires appropriate faculty member approval.
- Post-generals students engaged in dissertation work will normally register for between 4 – 16 credits per term of **Religion 3000: Direction of Doctoral Dissertation**, in addition to whatever other regular coursework they may be taking.
- For those taking on TF duties, they may register for up to 16 credits of **Religion 3002: Teaching**.
- The CSR also offers **Religion 3003: Course-Related Work**. Registration for this course is all petition-based.

All four of these courses may make up a student's semester coursework. For example, students may take 8 credits of Religion 3002 to cover 2 sections of TF duties, 4 credits of Religion 3001, and 4 credits of Religion 3003.

Languages

PhD students must, in consultation with their advisers, select two languages other than English relevant to their studies. Students will be required to demonstrate competency in these languages prior to sitting for their comprehensive exams. The chosen languages should equip the students to engage the most important commentarial discourses (oral or written) in their areas of scholarship. These two languages represent a minimum requirement; specific subfields or research projects may require others.

If the requirement is to be met with languages commonly taught and examined at Harvard University, students can meet the required standard either by achieving a grade of B+ or better in two semesters of a second-year language course (in either HDS or FAS); or by achieving a "high pass" on an HDS qualifying exam. (Note: receiving A- or better in the HDS Summer Language Program does not meet the requirement – the exam must still be taken.)

Students whose first language is not English may meet the requirement with a "pass" on one of the language exams.

In the case of languages for which there is not an intermediate two-semester course at Harvard or a qualifying exam at HDS, the standard for what constitutes the equivalent of “intermediate reading competence” and a “high pass” on language examinations will be determined by faculty in the relevant field and by the instructor or examiner. Examiners in these languages must be identified and contacted by the student and approved by the DGS. Exams in written languages should be comparable to the HDS qualifying exam: translating a text of moderate difficulty in a one-hour exam with one dictionary, using a text of religious or historical significance or a scriptural text. In oral languages, the subfield faculty, the DGS, the examiner and the student will confer on the appropriate equivalent.

All language requirements must be met before General Exams are taken.

(Ph.D. Language Requirement, adopted Spring 2020)

All language requirements must be reported through the [Microsoft Form: Language Requirement Fulfillment](#).

Language Requirement Fulfillment Options

Harvard University offers language courses for many languages. If a student decides to meet the language standards through coursework, their coursework should reflect a B+ or higher across two semesters of a intermediate language course in FAS or HDS. Doctoral students may qualify for a limited number of tuition waivers for summer language courses offered in FAS both the summer before matriculation and the summer after their first year.

Harvard Divinity School offers language competency exams in Hebrew, Greek, German, French, Arabic, Spanish, and others three times a year: early September, late January, and late April.

The CSR strongly urges new doctoral students with preparation in their required languages to sign up for one or more exams administered in early September. While they may not pass, they can use the experience to plan to study their target languages, through either choosing an appropriate course or studying solo. Failures are recorded on doctoral students’ internal record sheet, but never released on their transcript.

Additional Language Fulfillment Information

Doctoral students who previously received a degree from Harvard University may use any language coursework completed then that meet the above standards. However, they must still report that coursework to the CSR admin.

The CSR cannot accept other universities’ language course credits toward this requirement.

For all other questions regarding the language requirement, be sure to contact the DGS and Student Coordinator.

The Second Year Review

The main purpose of the Second Year Review is to consider and clarify the overall design and progress of a student’s academic program. There are usually two faculty reviewers: the advisor, or a faculty in the student’s field of specialization; and a faculty outside the student’s field. Another purpose is to assess the student’s academic progress in regard to particular program requirements for degree completion (e.g.

language requirements). A third purpose is to review the fields that the student proposes to cover on their General Examinations.

Second Year Review Materials

A student should submit two major course papers to their reviewers for the Second Year Review: one within their specialization, and one outside their field or discipline. They should also include a 1- to 2-page statement of academic purpose. One paper may be from a course taken with one of the reviewers, but one should be from a course taken with some other faculty member, *not the other reviewer*.

Procedures for the Second Year Review

When ready, around the third or fourth semester of study, doctoral students submit the Intent to Take Second Year Review Form. This form can be filled out by either the student or the advisor, detailing which reviewers and papers they all will discuss. When filling out the form, they may include the date if one has been set.

Students must submit their Intent to Take the Second Year Review to CSR Administration by completing the [Microsoft Form: Notice of Intent to Take the Second Year Review](#).

When the reviewers and doctoral student decide on a date and time, the reviewers will notify the Student Coordinator of that information. All review materials must be submitted to both reviewers at least a week prior to the review date.

The Second Year Review should (as needed) lead to the following recommendations:

- Clarify a timetable for completing remaining requirements
- Specify further coursework
- Address any advising issues
- Clarify fields and timetable for General Examinations

A written summary of all such recommendations should be sent to the student as soon as possible after the review. The advisor should also submit this summary through the Second Year Review Form, for CSR admin to review and include in the student record, by completing the [Microsoft Form: Report on Second Year Review](#).

The A.M. Degree

The CSR does not accept any candidates for the A.M. degree; our students enter the Ph.D program exclusively. Nevertheless, the requirements for the master's degree must be satisfied by all students as they move toward the doctorate, and are expected to be completed by the end of the fourth term.

The requirements for the A.M. degree in passing are:

- A minimum of two full years of coursework (16 courses with a minimum average grade of B) completed:
- Two languages other than English.
- The course requirements outside the specialization fulfilled
- A satisfactory Second Year Review completed.

The A.M. degree may be granted when these requirements are fulfilled. In order to receive the degree, Ph.D. students may log in to my.harvard, request a Master's in Passing, and apply as soon as their requirements are complete and recorded.

For students who decide not to continue their doctoral program, they may take a terminal A.M. In this case, the Second Year Review is not required.

Year 3: General Examinations

After the satisfactory completion of two years of full-time study, the modern language requirements, coursework outside their specialization, and the second-year review, doctoral students prepare for their General Examinations. Students usually take up these examinations by the end of their third year. All INCs must be resolved before General Examinations.

Written examinations take place in October during fall term and in April during spring term. The Committee announces the exact dates six month ahead of time via email, and students must submit the "Notice of Intent to Take Ph.D. General Examinations in the Study of Religion" by that time. Note: Bibliographies for general exams are due about six months before exams. Exam dates are posted in the weekly CSR Grad Newsletter and in the heading of the Notice of Intent form.

Below is the outline of the overall structure of General Exams in the Study of Religion.¹

1. Theory and Methods in the Study of Religion
2. Context of Study Exam (Religious Tradition or Historical Complex)
3. Specialization within Context of Study
4. Specialization within Context of Study (exam/paper)

Each examination is taken in a three-hour period, and each examination or part offers a choice of 2-3 questions. A two-hour oral examination will be held within the two weeks following the written general exams. The examining committee for the oral normally consists of the faculty members who prepared written exams for a given student.

Students will indicate on the Intent form where they will take their exam. This can be at home, or some other quiet place of your choosing (e.g. Lamont Library). The Student Coordinator will email exams to students fifteen minutes before each examination begins using their preferred Harvard-affiliated email address. The exam schedule builds in a thirty-minute snack break to be utilized when needed.

First Exam: The Theory and Method Exam

While all General Exams are customized for individual students, the Theory and Method exam is similar for all doctoral students regardless of specialization or area of study.

Goals of the First Exam

Building on work done in Religion 2001 and 2002, the Theory and Method doctoral exam invites students to consider both the history of religious studies as a discipline and contemporary theoretical discussions about religion in relation to their own particular subfields. The Committee has designed this portion of the General Exams to:

- prepare doctoral students for professional lives where they need a clear sense of current issues within the discipline.
- frame the particulars of their research interests in the wider context of religious studies more generally, so as to enter the details of their own disciplines into broader conversations that cross subfields.

¹ See New Testament and Early Christianity Field Exams if that is your specialty. Those requirements are different.

- develop an understanding of the history of the study of religion, of the making of “religion” and “the religions” as categories of various inquiries from the early modern period to the present, within the context of wider intellectual, social, and cultural history
- think about major historical and contemporary theorists of religion in the broader context of the social, cultural, and political history of knowledge from the Enlightenment to the present
 - particularly in relation to the place of the construction of “religion” and “religions” within this history.

Structure of the First Exam

The Theory and Method examination consists of three parts.

1. A section on the History of the study of “religion” and the “religions,” and/or other concepts central to the study of religion from the enlightenment to the present.
2. A section on contemporary conversations in the study of religion that focus on issues and problems of current intellectual urgency across the study of religion.
3. A final section on two theorists of religion or of particular use for the study of religion.
 - a. This bibliography should include both primary source material representing the major works of each theorist, as well as secondary literature on the work and contributions of each.

Preparing for General Examinations

Examiners

Each student must choose a Theory and Method examiner and submit a reading list according to the CSR schedule. The student and their TM examiner will work out (in advance) particular problems or concerns for the student to concentrate on in their preparation. A collection of past general exam questions and bibliographies are available in the CSR Graduate Resources SharePoint site for students to review to assist in this process. Examiners will be responsible for writing individually tailored examination questions in consultation with the student.

Working with an individual faculty member serves to make room for students to bring their own interests and concerns into current conversations in the discipline and to learn to view their own areas of specialization within the wider frame of the history of the study of religion. The CSR intends that students make their substantive areas of academic concern the pivot of the theoretical learning and engagement that characterizes the Theory and Method examination (e.g. the development of a particular ritual in Tibetan Buddhism, a problem of interpretation in Deuteronomy, a figure in American Catholic history, or an issue in Karl Barth’s theology, to cite some examples).

Questions to pose in the task of working out specific foci for each part of the exam might include: how does a particular student’s research contribute to, participate in, or change the terms and orientations of the contemporary conversations across the field? What is the specific history of their area of specialization (the intellectual history of the making of “Buddhism,” for instance) in its relationship to the broader cultural history of the study of religions? How do the theorists they have chosen to work on help them sharpen questions of religious analysis in their work?

Committee on the Study of Religion
Adopted May 22, 2009

Submitting a Paper for the Fourth Exam

If the student's advisor agrees, a doctoral candidate for the PhD may submit a paper between 20 and 30 pages in length in lieu of a fourth exam, namely the special field exam. **Intent to write such a paper, with a bibliography and brief description, should be submitted together with other General Exam bibliographies six months prior to the exam period.** An updated bibliography should be submitted with the paper. The chosen topic should anticipate the expected focus of the dissertation. This option may only be exercised with the approval of the student's academic advisor. It must be original work prepared for this purpose; work previously submitted for any other purpose (including a course, colloquium, or presentation) is not acceptable.

The paper must be submitted by 5:00 pm to the Student Coordinator in the Study of Religion by email or paper, not later than one month prior to the first exam date (e.g., if the first exam would have been given on April 21, the paper would be due by March 21, or the nearest day to that date on which the office is open). This deadline is non-negotiable. If a paper is not submitted by the deadline, the student must sit for the fourth exam based on the original bibliography. The submitted paper will be copied and distributed to the general examination readers and discussed during oral examination along with the three other exams.

This option has been chosen by many students. Most have found it to be an excellent way to begin work on their dissertation topic; receive meaningful feedback from a number of faculty at an early stage in this process, and often to curtail the "lag-time" after generals and before submitting the prospectus by providing a strong intellectual link between these stages in the program.

CSR Doctoral Sub-Committee
Approved December 7, 2007

The Honor Pledge

Students must sign an honor pledge before taking the general exams, stating that the signed student will use their computer for word-processing only.

Submitting General Exams

General Examinations are customarily typed. All editing and proofreading must be completed during the exam time. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the computer being used is in good working condition. In the event of a malfunction, the Student Coordinator (in consultation with the student's faculty advisor) will make all possible efforts for re-examination as soon as possible.

Preparing for the exams includes checking the computer functionality prior to the beginning of exams. A student may use uncommon software, provided they consult with the Student Coordinator a minimum of two weeks prior to the first exam to make necessary arrangements.

At the end of each exam period, students will email their exam to the Student Coordinator, who will confirm receipt and provide copies to respective readers. Exams will be retained as part of the student's record in the Study of Religion Office.

If a student plans to handwrite their exam, they must consult with the Student Coordinator at least two weeks prior to the first exam. This choice will affect where the student might take their exam. For handwritten exams, the student must return the original exam to the Study of Religion office at the

conclusion of each exam period. A photocopy will be made and returned to the student to convert to a typed format. Each exam must be converted and returned within 24 hours to the office unless other arrangements have been made. No changes may be made from the original exams, including spelling, grammar, capitalization, and content. The typed exam will be compared against the original.

Policy on Failure of General Examinations

Should any student fail any part or all their General Examinations, the student will be required to retake all the exams unless exemptions from certain areas were recommended by the examining committee and approved by the Doc-Sub Committee. Should the examiners wish to exempt certain areas, they must provide a rationale for their decision in writing to the doctoral subcommittee. Likewise, an examining committee must provide a written rationale to the Doc-Sub Committee for any recommendation that a student retake an exam in a different form (e.g., writing a paper in lieu of retaking the exam). A student may re-take General Examinations once and must re-take a failed exam in the next exam period. They must also keep the same examiners (where possible) and the same bibliographies.

This written report must be produced as soon as possible after the decision in order to provide clear and timely information to the student and Doc-Sub Committee. If the Doc-Sub Committee denies the exemption or the request that a student re-take their exam in a different form, the students' examiners may appeal to the Standing Committee.

Any recommendations to exempt a student from re-taking one or more of the General Examinations, or to have the student re-take the exam in different form, must be made by the student's examining committee as a whole.

New Testament and Early Christianity Field Exams

General Examinations in the field of New Testament and Early Christianity follow the required structure of three written examinations (of three hours each, described below) plus an oral examination (of two hours) prescribed by the Committee on the Study of Religion and the Faculty of Divinity. Ph.D. candidates are additionally required to take a fourth examination in Theory and Method. In conversation with his/her faculty examiners, the student will develop a bibliography tailored to the student's interests that encompasses a breadth of relevant sources and scholarship. Such breadth should include ancient texts with a variety of religious affiliations and genres, and a geographical range in the ancient Mediterranean world.

Exam 1: Theory and Method.

The student will review theories and methods and their development in the discipline of religious studies as well as in the field of New Testament/Early Christian Studies.

Exam 2: Focusing on Ancient Texts

This day involves two examinations.

2.1 Chosen Topic.

The student will choose a topic area of his /her interest that is sufficiently broad to include a wide range of materials from the ancient world (e.g., sacrifice, slavery, imperialism, martyrdom, gender/ sexuality, christology). S/he will investigate what key ancient and scholarly literature exists on the topic area of his or her interest and will evaluate critically how it has been and currently is approached in contemporary scholarship.

2.2 Close Reading/Theoretical Frameworks/Methods of Analysis.

The student will choose an ancient text in the original language(s) and investigate it thoroughly from at least three broadly different theoretical frameworks or methods of analysis. S/he will then be prepared to offer a critical evaluation of these approaches and to articulate his/her own approach.

Exam 3: Practicing Skills in the Field.

This day involves two examinations.

3.1 Syllabus.

In advance of the examinations, the student will write an annotated syllabus for a class they would wish to teach in the field. Annotations will include information about the kind of institution, level of the students, format, and pedagogical approach the candidate intends to take; why they organized and designed the readings and assignments as s/he did, and course goals. This syllabus will contain ancient as well as scholarly sources. The examination will consist of questions about this syllabus.

3.2 Comprehensive review article.

The student will investigate the history of the study of an aspect of the field (e.g., the study of Jesus, empire, apologists, women in the Bible, orthodoxy and heresy). The student will write a comprehensive review article on this topic for his /her exam, preparing him or herself in part by studying a wide range of ancient texts that are the basis of this debate. Exam questions will be based on this review article.

The syllabus and review essay together should not exceed 20 pages, excluding footnotes and bibliography. They will be due at a specified time one month prior to the student's general examinations.

Exam 4: Special Area

Through this exam preparation, the student ideally develops a greater familiarity with some larger area inside which the doctoral dissertation will later develop and prepares a bibliography that leads to the prospectus. Students should consult with their advisors to define the special subject area at an early point in their programs. On application, students may be permitted to submit a major research paper in lieu of the special area exam. If they choose to do so, that essay is due one month in advance of the first day of written examinations.

Year 3 & 4: Student Teaching

While teaching is not required for the degree, it is considered integral to the program. As part of the offer of admission, doctoral students are guaranteed teaching fellowships in the third and fourth year for their living expenses. Students are encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities in courses found in the Study of Religion, other FAS departments, and HDS.

Students get four terms of “priority” teaching fellowship appointments, typically in G3 and G4 years. G1 and G2 students may not teach. Students can seek out teaching fellowship positions in several ways, including directly approaching faculty with whom they would like to work and regularly checking Central Application for Teaching Sections (CATS). Both the Student Coordinator and Graduate Student Coordinator will circulate notices from other departments through email and the Graduate Student Newsletter. When requested, students should provide a resume and brief statement of academic interests, as well as any other experience and subject matter preference. Students should inform the Student Coordinator and Graduate Student Coordinator of courses they pursue, and appointments offered to them.

Priority students may defer their priority status up to four terms if they receive alternative funding, teach less than 0.4 FTE during the term, or for other reasons. Students may not defer their priority status beyond their G6 year. The supplemental priority “top-up” payment is indivisible from priority status.

Note: Priority students who are teaching at least 0.4 FTE are automatically invoking their priority status for that term. Therefore, they cannot defer their priority status.

Additionally, there are junior and senior tutorials in the CSR undergraduate concentration (contact the DUS), as well as other courses across Harvard, including MOOCs. These all offer teaching options at different schedules and compensations from routine teaching fellowship sections. In general, tutorial appointments are only available to advanced G-year students who have passed their general exams. Contact the DUS for more information about junior and senior tutorials.

First-time teaching fellows are required to participate in the Bok Center orientation week conference in the fall. The CSR staff coordinates professional development workshops during the year, some of which address TF issues. Throughout the year, we also offer pedagogy courses and workshops. Barker 405 is the office available for working TFs to meet with students during the term; it may be reserved through the CSR main office.

Year 4: The Dissertation Prospectus

The prospectus is a proposal formulated by the student about the intended doctoral dissertation. Within, at most, twelve months of passing generals, the student is expected to submit the prospectus. Acceptance of the prospectus by the Standing Committee constitutes a kind of contract: the full Committee agrees that if the student completes a successful dissertation in accord with, or reasonably developed from, what the prospectus delineates, the Committee will recommend the degree.

Formulating a prospectus for faculty represents a significant stage during dissertation work, and its importance should not be underestimated. Not only does it allow students to come to a fuller and more adequate understanding of their own project, but it also enlists the active support of the faculty who are expected to provide significant advice and criticism at this crucial stage in its development.

Students are responsible for formulating a significant and worthwhile dissertation project, with as much advice and consultation as appropriate, that others will recognize as a solid contribution both to the chosen subfield and to the study of religion more generally. **Each dissertation, in contributing to knowledge, should also illuminate our understanding of religion.**

Advisors and Committees

As a student prepares their prospectus, they should choose faculty to make up their prospectus committee. They first choose a supervisor who is most likely, but not necessarily, the advisor who has overseen their progress up to that point. Then, the student selects two or three faculty members to make up the rest of the committee. Committees can include up to 5 members.

This prospectus committee will become their dissertation committee. Students may make changes to their dissertation committee with the approval of the DGS. In cases where the doctoral committee membership does not meet CSR requirements, or where the membership does not seem like a good fit for the dissertation, the DGS may consult with the Doctoral Subcommittee for advice about approval.

GSAS requirements outline that there must be two (2) Harvard FAS faculty on the dissertation committee. This includes FAS emeriti and Harvard faculty with GSAS degree appointments. Readers in other Harvard colleges or without Harvard-affiliation may also be on the dissertation committee.

Content and Format of Prospectus

The purpose of a prospectus is to enable students (a) to clarify what they conceive to be the nature and significance of their prospective dissertation work and (b) to receive constructive criticism, advice, and approval from both the full CSR and members of their dissertation committee.

The Prospectus must be no more than 3000 words double-spaced, excluding bibliography and notes. It must be cogent and intelligible to members of the CSR Standing Committee. There is no well-established formula or models for writing the prospectus, but each prospectus must attend the following issues:

I. Topic and thesis

There is an important distinction between a topic and a thesis. A topic represents the issue the dissertation addresses. A thesis constitutes the position which the student takes in relation to the topic (i.e. the central hypothesis under examination). For example:

- a. Topic: Barth's theological method
- b. Thesis: Barth's theological method results from his interpretation of the Word of God as an act which is not subject to human manipulation.

In the prospectus, students should carefully circumscribe the topic of their dissertation, including historical and conceptual analyses of the topic (to the extent that such analyses clarify what the student takes to be at issue). The aim is not only to show how the dissertation will be done, but that the student is familiar enough with the topic that the project can be done and done within a reasonable timeframe.

Students should be thinking about possible dissertation topics as they prepare for General exams, with the hope that the exam process will move easily into the writing of the prospectus.

II. Sources, Method, and Theory

The prospectus must also be clear about the sources upon which the dissertation will depend, the method/s the student will be using, and where appropriate, the theoretical resources that will be relevant to their work. In discussing method, it is especially important to attend to any special problems that might occur in the course of research and to note how these problems might be addressed.

III. Contribution to Scholarship

Students should specify as carefully as possible what they consider to be the various ways their project will contribute to their field of study or area of specialization. Students will include a brief statement of the current status of their topic within their larger field of study, to indicate the various problems at issue, and to show how their project will advance the discussion. Prospectuses are reviewed by the full Standing Committee and the concern of that committee includes the extent to which dissertation work can be understood to contribute not only to particular fields of study but also to the broader study of religion, continuing the intellectual work begun in Religion 2001 and 2002. Students are encouraged to articulate continuing their contribution and research to a future horizon of the community concerned with the study of religion in connection to the received heritage of religious studies, as well as on contemporary discussions and debates.

IV. Chapter Outline

The prospectus must provide an outline of the chapter divisions and a brief description of how the argument will be developed from chapter to chapter.

V. Bibliography

The prospectus must also include a brief bibliography indicating the principal primary and secondary sources upon which the thesis is expected to be based. It should be representative, not exhaustive.

Submitting Prospectus for Approval

When the prospectus is ready to be submitted to the Standing Committee, the student's advisor should confirm that all of the formal guidelines for the prospectus have been met. The student or the advisor can fill out the [Microsoft Form: Dissertation Prospectus Checklist & Submission](#). If the student's advisor will not be able to attend the Standing Committee meeting in which the prospectus is being discussed, he or she should write a letter to the Chair of the Committee, indicating an evaluation of the project and a willingness to supervise the work. This letter also proposes two or three faculty members, in addition to

the advisor, to serve as members of a dissertation committee. While the majority of the dissertation committee will be scholars in the student's particular specialty, others outside his or her field might be included as well. The advisor should ascertain that these other scholars have read the draft of the prospectus, and that they are prepared to represent their views at the Standing Committee meeting.

Once the prospectus is submitted it will be considered, along with comments of the advisor, by the Standing Committee at its earliest scheduled meeting. When the CSR approves the prospectus, it also approves the dissertation committee, on occasion making recommendations for additions or adjustments. In every case, the advisor is a member of the dissertation committee.

After the Prospectus is Approved

Once the Standing Committee approves a prospectus, it will then refer it to the dissertation committee who will meet with the student to discuss the project in depth. Normally this is a two-hour meeting. The dissertation committee then reports back to the Standing Committee, recommending final approval of the proposal. In some cases, the dissertation committee may indicate that it has asked the student to make some revisions and that it will delay its formal recommendation until they have been received.

Students may make changes to their dissertation committee with the approval of the DGS. In cases where the doctoral committee membership does not meet CSR requirements, or where the membership does not seem like a good fit for the dissertation, the DGS may consult with the Doctoral Subcommittee for advice about approval.

Year 5: The Dissertation

Upon formal approval of the prospectus, the student begins writing their dissertation. At minimum, one chapter per year of the dissertation must be submitted to their advisor. The length of dissertations is limited to a maximum of approximately 75,000 words or 300 pages, excluding bibliography. Permission to exceed this length may be granted by DocSub or the Chair at the request of the dissertation advisor.

Once the dissertation is completed and approved by the advisor, the degree candidate is examined orally by the dissertation committee which was approved concurrent with the Dissertation Prospectus approval. For more information on who can serve on a dissertation committee, revisit [Submitting Prospectus for Approval](#).

The entire Ph.D. program should not exceed seven years. Students who do not complete the degree in seven years must petition the Committee for an extension of time in the program. Petitions may be made only for one year at a time. In such a petition, the student and the dissertation advisor must present evidence of reasonable and substantial progress, and present a timetable for dissertation completion. Extensions will not be granted beyond the tenth year.

Keep in mind the GSAS Degree Calendar as you prepare to graduate. Students **must** apply for graduation by the deadlines outlined.

The Defense

When scheduling the defense, please refer to the GSAS degree calendar for dissertation ProQuest due dates. These dates represent the last step in the dissertation process. The dissertation defense should ideally take place at least a week prior to the electronic submission date, to ensure enough time for any revisions requested by the dissertation committee.

When a student has completed their dissertation draft, their dissertation advisor should write a letter to the Standing Committee announcing the date of their defense. The advisor's letter should be received at least one week prior to the Standing Committee meeting at which it would be considered. Please check the website calendar for meeting dates of the Standing Committee or contact the office of the Study of Religion for dates in order that you and your advisor may plan the timing of submission and defense.

The student must submit their final dissertation draft directly to each reader, keeping in mind that readers may need up to six weeks' reading time before the defense. An abstract must accompany the dissertation, not to exceed 350 words, prior to the defense; the abstract is required for publication in Dissertation Abstracts International.

The Student Coordinator assists the student and their committee to schedule the defense. The committee may decide to book a room, and hold the defense in person or over Zoom. Regardless, they must keep the Student Coordinator informed in order to help reserve a space and/or ensure all adequate tech as needed.

Prior to the defense, the Student Coordinator will draft a copy of the Dissertation Acceptance Certificate (DAC) and send it to the student and the dissertation committee for their review and approval. The student will need to provide the final title page of their dissertation and a list of their committee members (with their email addresses).

The DAC must include:

- The exact title of the dissertation, including punctuation.

- The FAS Registrar's office will only accept a DAC on which the title matches the electronically submitted version *exactly*.
- The student's name as they want it to appear (middle names, initials, etc.)
- The dissertation committee members, listed in the order of which they should appear (e.g. dissertation committee chair, first), and with their names exactly as they want it to appear (middle names, initials, etc.).
- The confirmed date of the defense.

After the Defense

Once the student has defended, the committee chair will email the Student Coordinator to circulate the final DAC for signatures through Adobe Sign. The student will need the final signed PDF copy of the DAC for ProQuest dissertation submission.

Note: as of AY2021-22 DACs are only being produced and signed electronically; the Registrar no longer accepts hard copies.

Griffin GSAS requires online submission of the dissertation. Please refer to the current guidelines for preparation and submission of the dissertation in the GSAS Handbook. Dissertations must be submitted to the Registrar's Office by 5:00 PM on the dissertation deadline date. No exceptions are granted for late submissions, nor are improperly formatted submissions accepted.

Graduation & Diplomas

Students must apply for graduation according to the GSAS deadlines. For ease, the following chart indicates the final term for which a student must enroll to qualify for graduation.

<u>Degree</u>	<u>Last Term of Enrollment</u>
March	Previous Fall Term
May	Concurrent Spring Term
November	Previous Spring Term

Students who do not deposit a dissertation by the deadline must register for the fall term. Please see the [Griffin GSAS Degree Calendar 2023-2024](#). Deadlines for health coverage selections may differ from degree submission deadlines; it is your responsibility to plan accordingly.

In addition to academic requirements, students are required to meet the financial requirements for the degree. For details please review the Financial Aid & Requirements section of the GSAS Handbook.

Diplomas and Commencement: Please refer to the costs and processes outlines by the FAS Registrar for diplomas and commencement. All students who receive degrees in November, March and May of the academic year of that May graduation, may participate in the Commencement celebration.