

Harvard University
Committee on the Study of Religion

Handbook for Ph.D. Students

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1. Guidelines for Advising and Mentoring Doctoral Students

The advising of doctoral students is one of the most important aspects of our work as teachers and scholars. This document is meant to establish some general guidelines or best practices for the advisor-doctoral student relationship as a set of mutual or shared responsibilities. “Guidelines for Advising and Mentoring Doctoral Students” was developed in conversations among members of the Doctoral Subcommittee (which includes doctoral student representatives) and more broadly with students in the program.

Entering doctoral students may request a specific advisor; customarily the faculty member indicated in the student's application based on the area of specialization is assigned. 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. Occasionally students will have two co-advisors.

The primary responsibilities of the advisor are a) to counsel the student on how best to lay the foundations, through coursework and seminars, for more independent work in the area of specialization; and b) to help ensure that these specialized studies are set within the general context of the study of religion. The faculty advisor participates in a student's second year review, ordinarily chairs the examining committee for the general examinations, works with the student in formulating a prospectus, and directs the writing of the dissertation.

Academic Advising

Advisors meet with their doctoral students—especially those at the pre-dissertation stage—a minimum of three times per semester, for at least an hour each meeting: at the beginning, mid-point, and end of the semester. For students who are working elsewhere and easily accessible via phone and/or email, the same general guidelines for contact hours apply.

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

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

In advising third-year students, special attention is paid to helping the student assemble a committee for general examinations.

For students who are post-generals, advisors provide timely reading (within four weeks of submission) and substantial commenting on drafts of the dissertation prospectus and all subsequent chapters. Advisors also counsel students on seeking employment, from reading drafts of letters of application to commenting on writing samples and job talks to introducing students to scholars in the field at conferences and seminars.

Requests for recommendation letters are to be made by the student at least three weeks in advance of the deadline; recommendation letters are written and submitted by the advisor in a timely fashion.

Mentoring about Teaching

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

Overview and 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.

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

Full time study is required during years one and two, which means 4 courses 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. Courses pertinent to their different areas of study may be found across 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 [the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Handbook](#) or the [GSAS Guide to Admission and Financial Aid](#).

- 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 2nd year review (occurs by the end of the fourth term)

Year 3: General Examinations & Student Teaching

- Students teaching is guaranteed for 2/5 per term (two traditional course sections) for 4 terms
- General Examinations are to be completed by the end of the 6th term

Year 4: Dissertation Prospectus

- To be completed within 12 months of taking of the general exams

Year 5 and Following: The Dissertation

- After approval of the prospectus, at least one chapter per year must be submitted to the advisor
 - To be completed, normally, by the end of the seventh year
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GSAS Satisfactory Progress Requirements

All students in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences must be making satisfactory progress in order to be eligible for any type of financial aid. The following five provisions are the general definition of 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 [GSAS Student Handbook Chapter V, 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 a grace of INC should notify the Director of Graduate Studies and the Program Administrator as soon as possible to ensure satisfactory progress within the program.

Communicating with Students in the CSR

Often, the Program Administrator, Graduate Student Coordinator, and the Staff Assistant communicate with CSR doctoral students; these communications include distribution of flyers, job postings, and notice about events. It is the student's responsibility to update personal information in my.harvard, and to update the primary contact email address, if necessary, with the CSR staff. Only FAS- or Harvard-issued email addresses will be used for communication between staff and CSR students.

Petitions for Extensions

If a student anticipates being unable to fulfill any of these steps within the specified or expected time period, he or she must submit a written petition for an extension, countersigned by the advisor, to the Director of Graduate Studies. Once beyond the seventh year, he or she must petition annually for more time in the program. Extensions will not be granted past the 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 it, may be asked either to apply for a leave of absence, or, if the limitations on leave time have been reached, to withdraw from the program. In the latter instance, if a student subsequently completes the dissertation out of residence or is able to return to full-time resident study, he or she may be re-admitted to the program at the discretion of the student's advisor and the Doctoral Subcommittee.

Failure to maintain satisfactory progress in the program may result in being placed on “grace” or “unsatisfactory” status, and can impact financial support. If deficiencies are not rectified, a student may be required to withdraw from the program. These determinations will be made in consultation with the advisor and the Doctoral Subcommittee, which routinely reviews student progress.

Non-Resident Status

There are three statuses to which students may apply to register for an academic term or year with non-resident status: 1) **Traveling scholar** - students outside the Boston area engaged primarily in degree work; 2) **Leave of Absence** - degree candidates whose time will be devoted primarily to other than degree work. Any student who is teaching more than three-fifths averaged over the year must be a teaching *assistant* instead of a teaching *fellow*, and must register on leave of absence; or 3) **Studying at Another Harvard school** - degree candidates registered in another Harvard school.

[Please refer to the GSAS Student Handbook, "Non-Resident Students" for more detailed guidelines.](#)

Requirements in Detail

Years 1 & 2: Plan of Study, Coursework, Languages & 2-Yr Review

Plan of Study

In order to gain Committee approval of work to be done outside the specialization, the student must, in consultation with the advisor, submit a Plan of Study during their first term by early November (see forms). The Director of Graduate Studies will review and act upon the proposals received. Any later alterations in plans should be duly reported with an updated Plan of Study.

Coursework

Full-time study during the first two years (4 courses per each term; a total of 16) with a minimum average grade of B, is required. Included in these course requirements are:

Specialization Studies

It is expected that students will complete satisfactorily all basic courses, including those classical languages within their area of specialization, needed to lay the foundation for advanced work. These will vary from person to person and 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 (first year)
2. Religion 2002. Contemporary Conversations in the Study of Religion (second year)

If, in the estimation of the faculty instructor of instructors of Religion 2001 or Religion 2002, academic problems arise in any enrolled student's performance during the course of a semester, it is expected that instructors will follow the sequence below:

1. 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;
2. Contact the student's primary program advisor to discuss the concerns;
3. In consultation with the student and the advisor, and the program director if necessary, general concrete guidelines in writing to address the perceived issue and improve performance in the seminar. These written guidelines must be made available to all concerned.

If, within a reasonable time frame agreed on by the discussants, the student fails to improve performance to the degree that the instructors view that the student should not continue as an enrolled member of the seminar, but should consider alternatives (such as taking the seminar a different year, or more drastically, reconsider continuation in the doctoral program), there must be an independent review of this assessment by the Doctoral Sub-Committee before the student is compelled to withdraw from the seminar.

Additional Coursework Outside Specialization

Satisfactory completion of a minimum of two additional courses outside the specialization is required. These are normally in another tradition, geographical-historical complex, or methodology than the student's primary focus. The two courses should be in the same area and completed before the general examinations are taken.

This expected "distribution" of courses in the student's first two years constitutes the minimum amount of course work required, and is designed to assure that a degree of balance between the specialized and general components of a student's program of study is maintained. At the same time it will serve to help the student prepare for the Theory and Methods General Examination that is required at a later stage.

Guidelines on Religion 3000, Religion 3001, Religion 3002, and Religion 3003

3000-level courses are designed for students who are beyond coursework to be able to enroll in the required 16 credits per term. These options include:

When a student has already done substantial advanced work, the student may sign up for between 4 and 16 credits per semester of **Religion 3001: Reading and Research** with the approval of an appropriate faculty member.

Post-generals students engaged in dissertation work will normally register for between 4 and 16 credits per term of **Religion 3000: Direction of Doctoral Dissertation**, in addition to whatever other regular course-work they may take in a given semester.

Religion 3002: Teaching. (This replaces the former Time-T). Petition based. Register for up to 16 credits, or in combination with **Religion 3000**, **Religion 3001**, or **Religion 3003**.

Religion 3003: Course Related Work. (This replaces the former Time-C.) Petition based. Register for up to 16 credits, or in combination with other 3000-level courses.

Languages

Language Requirement

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

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

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

Additional information about languages

Students having extraordinary difficulty in passing language requirements are encouraged to contact both the Program Administrator and the Faculty Director of Language Testing.

Language exams taken as a student in a Masters program at HDS may be used to fulfill the language requirement if the required grade of High Pass was achieved. However, final exam results for the language courses in the Summer Language Program or the full-year German tutorial are not acceptable; doctoral students must take the official language exam.

Language Exams

Language competency exams are given three times a year: early September, late January and late April. A “High Pass” on a language exam attests that a student has sufficient knowledge and skill to use the language in scholarship. Some mistakes in recognizing grammar or vocabulary are allowed if they do not seriously undermine the student's ability to understand and translate the text. During the one-hour exam, students are asked to translate a one to two page text of intermediate difficulty. Students may use a dictionary.

Language exams are normally given for Hebrew, Greek, Latin, German, French, Arabic and Spanish. Students who need to be tested in another language should consult the Director of Graduate Studies (Giovanni Bazzana) or the Program Administrator (Elise Ciregna).

If you have any preparation in the required languages, you are strongly urged to sign up for and take one or more of the language qualifying exams given in early September of your first year. You may pass the exam, but even if you do not, you will be much better prepared to choose an appropriate course or study on your own before trying again. A failure is recorded on your internal record sheet, but is never released on a transcript.

Ph.D. students may qualify for a limited number of tuition waivers for summer language courses offered in FAS during the summers immediately preceding and following their first year. Students admitted after fall of 2015 qualify for tuition, program and application fee waivers for enrollment in the HDS Summer Language Program. It is advisable to do coursework prior to the HDS qualifying exam. Copies of prior exams are available from the HDS Registrar.

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: one in the student's field of specialization, normally the advisor, and one outside the student's field. A second purpose is to assess the student's academic progress in general and in regard to the particular program requirements for degree. A third purpose of the Second Year Review is to review the fields that the student is proposing to cover on the General Examinations.

The Second Year Review should, as needed, lead to any or some of the following recommendations: clarify a timetable for completing any remaining requirements, specify any further coursework, address any issues in advising, and clarify the 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 and provided to the Program Administrator for the student record.

Second Year Review Materials

A student participating in the Second Year Review must submit two major course papers to their reviewers; one in the specialization, and one outside their field or discipline, as well as a 1 to 2-page statement of academic purpose. One paper may be from a course taken with one of the reviewers, but the second paper should be from a course taken with some other faculty member, *not a reviewer*.

Procedures for Second Year Review

When ready, the student submits to the Program Administrator an ["Intent to Take Second Year Review" form](#). On this form, the review committee and papers are proposed by the student and the advisor, as well as semester to be taken. The review is to occur either in the third or the fourth semester of study.

The student should schedule a time for the review with the two faculty reviewers and notify the Program Administrator of the meeting date and time. The review normally is 1 to 1 ½ hours. The two papers, a copy of the statement of purpose and an updated review form must be submitted to both reviewers, and the Program Administrator, at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

The A.M. Degree

In the Study of Religion students are only admitted for the Ph.D. program; no one is admitted as a candidate for the A.M. 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 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.

For students who take a terminal A.M., a second year review is not required. 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.

Year 3: General Examinations

After the satisfactory completion of two years of full-time study, the modern language requirements, coursework outside the specialization, and the second year review, students prepare for the General Examinations. Ph.D. students usually take these examinations by the end of the third year. All INC's should 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 months ahead of time, 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.

The overall pattern of the written general examinations required of all Ph.D. students follows. The student should consult with his or her advisor in formulating the plan for the exams and deciding upon examiner(s) for each exam.

- 1. Theory and Method 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**

Each examination is taken in a 3-hour period, and each examination or part offers a choice of 2-3 questions. A 2-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.

The Theory and Method Exam

Goals of the 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. In replacing the old generic exam with this new, more theoretically driven and individually tailored exam, the Committee acts on the belief that students preparing themselves for professional lives in the study of religion need to have a clear sense of issues of current moment in the discipline; students must be able to frame the particulars of their research interests in the wider context of religious studies more generally, to enter the details of their own disciplines into broader conversations that cross particular subfields. Through this exam, we also seek to help students develop an understanding of the history of the study of religion, of the making of "religion" and "the religions" as categories of various sorts of inquiry from the early modern period to the present, in the context of wider intellectual, social and cultural history. In preparing for this exam, students are also encouraged to 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, and in particular in relation to the place of the construction of "religions" and "religion" in this history.

Structure of the 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 of 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 focuses on issues and problems of current intellectual urgency across the study of religion.
 - 3) a final section on two theorists of religion or of theorists particularly useful for the study of religion. 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.
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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 s/he 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 s/he 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. Both the syllabus and the comprehensive review article will be due at a specified time in advance of the first written examination. The syllabus and review essay together should not exceed 20 pages, excluding footnotes and bibliography. These are typically due 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.

Preparing for the Exam

Each student must choose a Theory and Method examiner and submit a reading list according to the Committee schedule. The student will work out in advance with the TM examiner particular problems or concerns for the student to concentrate on in his or her preparation. 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 Committee intends that students make their substantive areas of academic concern (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) the pivot of the theoretical learning and engagement that characterizes the new Theory and Method examination.

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 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

Substituting a Paper for the Fourth Exam

If the student's advisor agrees, a doctoral candidate for either the PhD or ThD may submit a paper between 20 and 30 pages in length in lieu of a fourth (Ph.D) or third (Th.D) 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, and the paper should be developed in consultation with the 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 p.m. to the Program Administrator 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 is a non-negotiable deadline. If a paper is not submitted by the deadline, the student must sit for the exam based on the original bibliography. The submitted paper will be copied and distributed to the general examination readers and discussed at the oral examination along with the other three exams.

This option has been approved in the past on an ad hoc basis for a number of 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.

*Approved at the Doctoral Sub-committee meeting
December 7, 2007*

Submission of General Exams

General Examinations are customarily typed, though you may hand-write your exam. All editing and proof-reading must be completed during the exam time. It is your responsibility to ensure that the computer being used is in good working condition. In the event of a malfunction, the administrator, in consultation with your faculty advisor, will make all possible efforts for a re-examination as soon as possible. You should check your computer's functionality and battery life well in advance and save work often during the exam period. If you are using an uncommon software please consult with the Program Administrator a minimum of two weeks prior to the first exam to make any necessary arrangements.

At the end of each exam period, you will email your exam to the Program Administrator, who will confirm receipt and provide copies to your examiners. Exams will be retained as part of your student record in the Study of Religion office.

If you plan to hand-write your exam, please consult with the Program Administrator at least two weeks prior to the first exam. For handwritten exams, you must first return the original exam to the Study of Religion office at the conclusion of each exam period. A photocopy will be made for you 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 exam, including spelling, grammar, capitalization, and content. The typed version will be checked against the original.

Honor Pledge

You must sign an honor pledge before taking the general exams, stating that you will use the computer for word processing only (provided by the Program Administrator on exam day).

Policy on Failure of General Examinations

Should a student fail any part or all of his or her General Examinations, the student would normally be required to re-take all the exams unless exemptions from certain areas were recommended by the examining committee and approved by the Doctoral Subcommittee. 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 Subcommittee for any recommendation that a student re-take an exam in a different form (e.g., writing a paper in lieu of re-taking an exam). A student may re-take General Examinations once and must re-take a failed exam in the next exam period. A student 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 to the Doctoral Subcommittee. If the Doctoral Subcommittee denies the exemption or the request that a student re-take an exam in a different form, the examining committee may appeal to the Standing Committee.

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

The categories of 'bar' and 'no bar' shall no longer be used. No student will be barred from re-taking failed General Examinations once. Should members of an examining committee feel a student would be best served by not re-taking the exams, they should communicate this to the student and explore options with him or her.

Year 3 & 4: Student Teaching

While teaching is not required for the degree, it is considered integral to the program. As part of most offers 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 and other FAS departments, as well as in the Harvard Divinity School.

Students are prioritized for teaching fellowship positions in years three and four. First- and second-year students may not teach. Students can seek out teaching fellow positions in several ways, including directly approaching faculty with whom they would like to work and regularly checking [CATS](#) (Central Application for Teaching Sections). The Program Administrator will also circulate notices from other departments as soon as received. When requested, students should provide a resume and a brief statement of academic interests, as well as any experience and subject matter preferences. Students should inform the Program Administrator of courses they are pursuing and appointments offered to them.

Priority students may defer their priority status--up to four terms--if they receive alternative funding, are teaching less than 2/5ths in a 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 2/5ths are automatically invoking their priority status for that term and therefore may not defer in this case.

Additionally, there are junior and senior tutorials in the undergraduate concentration (contact the Director of Undergraduate Studies) and other courses across Harvard, including "MOOC's", that 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.

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 Teaching Fellow issues. Barker 408 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 by which the full Committee agrees that if the student completes a successful dissertation that is in accord with, or a reasonable development from, what the prospectus delineates, it will recommend the degree.

It is the responsibility of the student to formulate, with as much advice and consultation as appropriate, a significant and worthwhile dissertation project that others will recognize as a solid contribution both to the chosen subfield and to the study of religion more generally. **Each dissertation, in making a contribution to knowledge, should also illuminate our understanding of religion.**

The student must choose a member of the Harvard faculty to supervise the prospectus and two or three additional faculty members to serve on the prospectus committee. The supervisor will most likely, but not necessarily, be the advisor who has been overseeing the student's program to that point.

The prospectus is written for The Standing Committee on the Study of Religion as a whole, to whom it must be intelligible and cogent. Most Committee members will not be experts in the student's particular specialty. **It should be no more than 3000 words double-spaced, excluding bibliography and notes. It is to be submitted electronically to the Program Administrator 2 weeks in advance of the Standing Committee meeting at which it will be considered.** The Dissertation Prospectus Checklist should also be submitted at this time. (see Forms at the end of the Handbook for the Checklist form and for a sample title page.)

The CSR will accept prospectuses at all of its meetings up to and including the April meeting. If a larger number of prospectuses is received at the April meeting, some may be tabled and discussed at the May CSR meeting. **NO NEW PROSPECTUSES WILL BE ACCEPTED FOR THE MAY MEETING.**

Advisor Responsibilities

Advisors are expected to be involved actively in the development of the prospectus—especially with regard to its scope and purpose—and to guide the student through early drafts.

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, by signing the "Prospectus Checklist", which is attached. 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 prospectus committee. While the majority of the prospectus 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 be prepared to represent their views at the Standing Committee meeting.

Standing Committee Responsibilities

The Director of Graduate Studies or other appropriate faculty meets with doctoral students at the beginning of each academic year to discuss the prospectus process in detail.

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 thesis committee, on occasion making recommendations for additions or adjustments. In every case, the advisor is a member of the prospectus committee.

Please note that additional substantive questions may be raised during the discussion of the prospectus at the CSR meeting; there is no obligation on the part of the Standing Committee to pass a prospectus. If a prospectus is turned back to the student for revisions, it will be resubmitted to the doctoral subcommittee for approval, including approval of the dissertation committee.

Once the Standing Committee approves a prospectus, it will then refer it to the prospectus committee who will meet with the student to discuss the project in depth. Normally this is a two-hour meeting. The prospectus committee then reports back to the Standing Committee, recommending final approval of the proposal. In some cases the prospectus 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. The prospectus committee, once its recommendation has been approved by the Standing Committee, is disbanded. Normally, the prospectus committee becomes the thesis committee.

Drafting a Dissertation Prospectus

The purpose of a prospectus is to enable students: (1) to clarify what they conceive to be the nature and significance of their prospective dissertation work, and (2) to receive constructive criticism, advice and approval from both the full Committee on the Study of Religion and members of a prospectus committee. Formulating a prospectus for the faculty represents a significant stage in the course of 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; 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.

While there are no well-established formulas or models for writing a prospectus, every prospectus should attend to the following issues:

1. Topic and thesis

There is an important distinction between a topic and a thesis. A topic represents the issue which the dissertation addresses. A thesis constitutes the position which the student takes in relation to the topic; i.e., the central hypothesis which is to be examined. 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.

2. 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.

3. Contribution to Scholarship

Students should specify as carefully as they can what they consider to be the various ways their project will contribute to the field of study in which they work. 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 the contribution of their research to a future horizon of the community concerned with the study of religion in connection to the received heritage of religious studies and on contemporary discussions and debates, as topic and thesis are formulated and developed and as the worth of the project for scholarship is stated.

4. 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.

5. Bibliography

The prospectus must include a brief bibliography indicating the principal primary and secondary sources upon which the thesis is expected to be based - it need not be exhaustive, but representative.

Year 5: The Dissertation

Upon formal approval of the prospectus, the student commences the writing of the dissertation. Following the approval of the prospectus, one chapter per year of the dissertation must be submitted to the advisor. The length of dissertations is limited to a maximum of approximately 75,000 words or 300 pages, exclusive of bibliography. Permission to exceed this length may be granted by the Doctoral Subcommittee or the Study of Religion 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 a committee of at least three faculty readers, two of whom must be members of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. In practice, any member of HDS faculty who is eligible to serve on the Standing Committee in the Study of Religion is authorized to sign Dissertation Acceptance Certificates as FAS members. Any faculty members from other schools at Harvard who have held or currently hold appointments in the CSR are authorized to sign Dissertation Acceptance Certificates as FAS members.

Please review these pages and guides to degree submission: [formatting of dissertation](#), [dissertation checklist](#), and electronic submission to Registrar for specific information: [Dissertations: A Guide to Preparing and Submitting Your Dissertation](#).

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 as well as a timetable for completion of the dissertation. Extensions will not be granted beyond the tenth year.

The Timing of Submission to the Standing Committee

When you are within reach of completing your dissertation draft, your dissertation advisor should write a letter to the Standing Committee proposing an examining committee. 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.

Scheduling the dissertation 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.

The final dissertation draft must be submitted directly to each reader. Once the examining committee is in place, a date for the dissertation defense will be set. In anticipating a defense date, keep in mind that your readers may need up to six weeks' reading time. You will need to prepare a dissertation abstract, not to exceed 350 words, prior to the dissertation defense. This document is required for publication in Dissertation Abstracts International.

Prior to your defense, the Graduate Coordinator will draft a copy of the Dissertation Acceptance Certificate (DAC) and send it to you and your committee for their review. Once the defense has successfully completed, the chair of your committee will let the Graduate Coordinator know to circulate the DAC via Adobe Sign. [Note: as of AY2021-22 DACs are only being produced and signed electronically; the Registrar no longer accepts hard copies.]

Preparation of the DAC: The Graduate Coordinator/Program Administrator will need to prepare the DAC (Dissertation Acceptance Certificate) ahead of time. Between one to two weeks prior to the dissertation defense the defending student should provide to the Administrator the following information:

- 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*).
- How the student wants her/his/their name to appear (including middle names or initials if desired).
- Your dissertation committee members in the order in which they should appear (Chair first), again with their names exactly as they should appear (some faculty use middle initials, for example).
- The confirmed date of the defense.

The Program Administrator will draw up a draft and send it around for the student's and dissertation committee's approval; once the draft is approved the final version will be sent to the committee members via Adobe Sign for their electronic signatures. The student will need a final signed PDF copy to include with the dissertation submission.

Degree Applicant Deadlines - The submission and application dates are generally similar each year. Students must check for the current deadlines, as late submissions are not accepted. The previous year's dates can be used as a guide for planning, until a current year's deadlines are posted.

Registration During Dissertation Years

Throughout your doctoral program, you must be registered as a full-time student. You may register in various ways depending on your location, financial needs and progress to degree. Please review the [Non-Resident option in the GSAS Student Handbook](#). If you need to interrupt your program, you may register for a [Leave of Absence by application to GSAS](#). Students may also benefit from the [Exchange Scholar Program](#), which allows for registration with a select group of schools which participate in the program with Harvard GSAS.

Graduation & Diplomas

An application for degree must be submitted by the deadline indicated in the Degree Calendar for a student to receive a degree from a GSAS degree program on one of the three annual degree conferral dates. [Please refer to the current guidelines for preparation and submission of the dissertation in the GSAS Handbook](#).

Online submission of the dissertation is required by the Graduate School. Please review the [submission details found on the FAS Registrar's site](#). No exceptions are granted for late submissions, nor are improperly formatted submissions accepted. [Carefully review the formatting guidelines - you are responsible for proper formatting of the required documents](#):

<https://gsas.harvard.edu/degree-requirements/dissertations/formatting-your-dissertation>

The signed, original Dissertation Acceptance Certificate following must be submitted to the Registrar's Office by 5:00 PM on the dissertation deadline date. No exceptions are allowed.

Registration and Tuition for Graduating Students

March degree candidates: the last term of enrollment is the fall term; do not register for spring.

May degree candidates: the last term of enrollment is the spring term, unless a dissertation is deposited by February 1, 2020. If so, your registration for spring will be cancelled.

November degree candidates: the last term of enrollment is the previous spring term.

Students who do not deposit a dissertation by the deadline, must register for the fall term. Please see the current [degree calendar on in the GSAS Handbook](#). [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.

Form: Plan of Study

1) [Please save a copy of the form.](#) 2) Complete your copy. 3) Send with your advisor's approval (cc in email).

Student (First & Last Name):

Field of Study (official):

Advisor (First & Last Name):

Required Courses: (indicate semester/year)

Religion 2001. The Cultural History of the Study of Religion:

Religion 2002. Contemporary Conversations in the Study of Religion:

Two courses outside your field (normally in another tradition or methodology than the student's primary focus, and both in the same area: indicate course number, name, semester and year):

1.

2.

Two Languages other than English (see Handbook for further detail):

Language 1:

Means of completion:

Expected term & year of completion

Language 2:

Means of completion:

Expected term & year of completion

Proposed term/year of Second Year Review:

Proposed term/year of General Exams:

Student Signature

Date

Advisor Approval Signature

Date

Form: Intent to Take the Second Year Review

*Please know that an online version of this form is available: <https://goo.gl/forms/kWb8qEfGj6ceNS1y2>

Student (First & Last Name):

Cohort Year (4-digit):

Field of Study (official):

Advisor (First & Last Name):

Proposed Date of Review:

Anticipated Faculty (Primary):

Anticipated Faculty (Secondary):

Proposed papers to be submitted (2):

Paper Title:

Course Number & Name

*(ex: Religion 2001. The History of the
Study of Religion)*

Course Head:

Paper Title:

Course Number & Name

*(ex: Religion 2001. The History of the
Study of Religion)*

Course Head:

Student Signature

Date

Advisor Approval Signature

Date

Form: Notice of Intent to Take Ph.D. General Exams

*Please note that an online version of this form is available: <https://goo.gl/forms/uWnXiZplkJ000XC03>

Student (First & Last Name):

Cohort Year (4-digit):

Field of Study (official):

Advisor (First & Last Name):

Semester & Year of Exams:

Include a bibliography for each exam signed by the examiner as a pdf or submitted by email with the examiner copied for approval confirmation. Each bibliography must begin with a paragraph explaining the nature of the topics chosen and the rationale for selecting the materials listed. Be sure to include your name, examination number (1, 2, 3 or 4), examination title (area) and the name of the faculty examiner at the beginning of each exam.

<i>Anticipated Exam</i>	<i>Anticipated Examiner</i>
<i>1) Theory and Method in the Study of Religion</i>	
<i>2) Tradition or Complex:</i>	
<i>3) Special Field or Minor Tradition:</i>	
<i>4) Special Field or Paper (include Title):</i>	

Include information about any required courses graded as "INCOMPLETE" or otherwise ungraded, as well as unfilled language or other requirements not yet met. Indicate your plan for completion. All program requirements for the first two years must be met prior to taking the General Exams.

Student Signature

Date

Advisor Approval Signature

Date

Director of Graduate Studies

Date

Form: Dissertation Prospectus Checklist

Once a student and his/her/their advisor have determined that the dissertation prospectus is complete, the student must submit one copy of the prospectus, along with a signed copy of this checklist to the Committee on the Study of Religion office. The Director of Graduate Studies will then confirm that the formal prospectus guidelines on this checklist have been met and contact the student.

- Document format is 12 pt. font, double-spaced.
- The length of the prospectus (excluding bibliography and notes) must NOT exceed 3000 words (roughly 10-12 pages). Word Count _____.
- Bibliography should be representative, but need not be exhaustive.

Once approved by the Director of Graduate Studies, the prospectus will be shared with the Standing Committee members.

Indicate All Proposed Committee Members:

Student Name (please print)

Student Signature

Date

Advisor Approval Signature

Date

Director of Graduate Studies (approved after student submission)

Date

Format of Prospectus Cover Page

PROSPECTUS

For a Dissertation entitled

[Title: Title]

to be presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Study of Religion

Field of Research

Harvard University

by

[First Name] [Middle Name] [Last Name]

Advisor: Professor [First Name] [Last Name]

Month YEAR