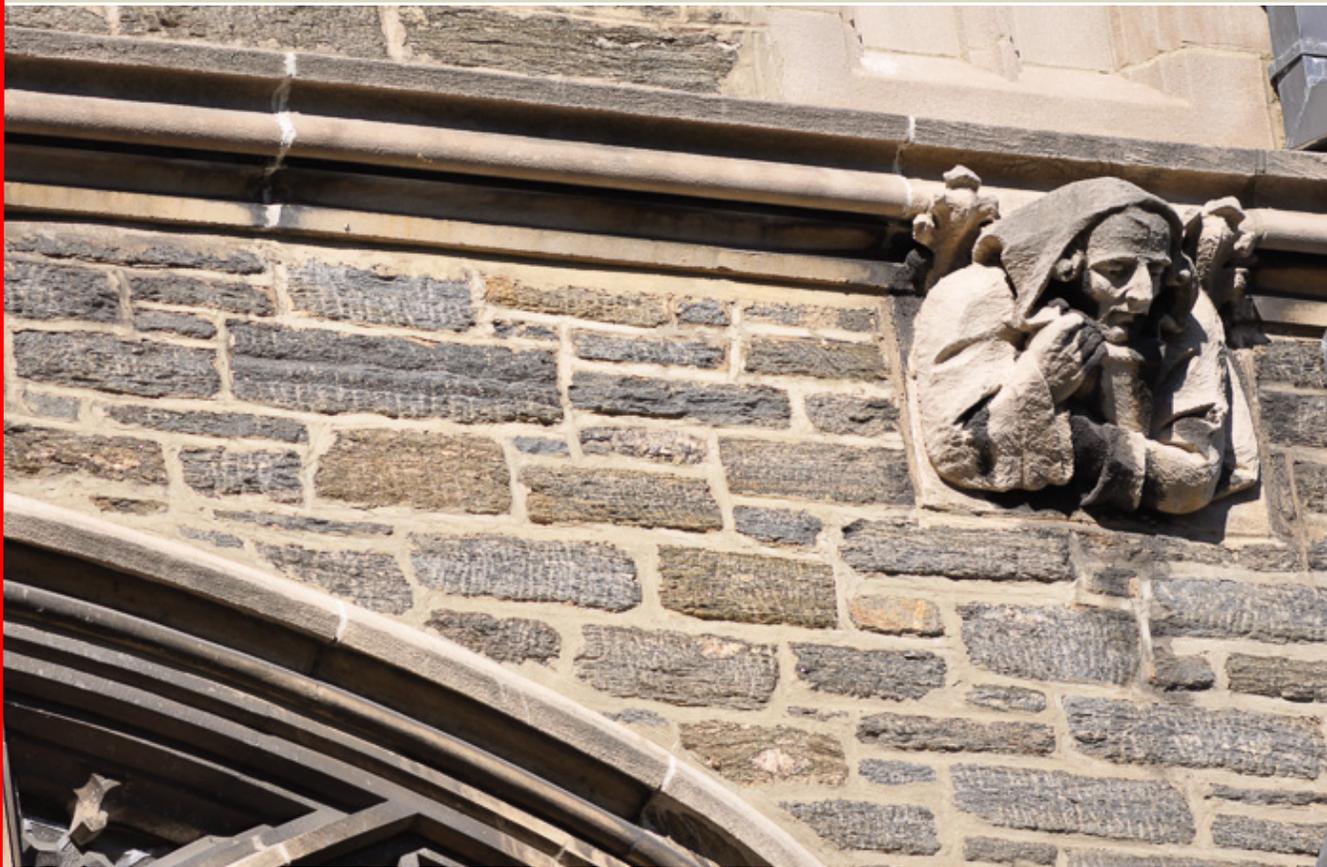


# PhD Handbook

## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES



Photograph by: Roy Weinstein, 2011

Revised November 2016

# PhD HANDBOOK: Policies and Procedures

Union Theological Seminary  
in the City of New York

Revised November 2016

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## 1. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Union Theological Seminary offers the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree in theology for students who want to teach in colleges, universities, and seminaries, or to hold positions of leadership in churches, religious institutions or social service and social justice agencies. The Union PhD program offers advanced study in the disciplines of theology with major specialization in one of the following fields.

### *1.1. Fields*

Bible: Old Testament; New Testament

History

Theology: Systematics; Ethics, Philosophy of Religion

Interreligious Engagement

Practical Theology: Psychology and Religion, Preaching and Worship, Religion and Education, Theology and the Arts

### *1.2. Interdisciplinary Cross-Fertilization*

Students elect a minor concentration in one of these fields or in another academic discipline relevant to their further research and teaching. Each field determines the concrete form and implementation of the major-minor structure. This structure is designed to enable interdisciplinary cross-fertilization and “mutual illumination” that is intended to generate original scholarship. This structure also equips graduates with the academic versatility and expanded teaching competency that will serve to optimize their employability in a competitive market.

The interdisciplinary nature of the Union PhD program is enhanced by a two-year long doctoral seminar that prepares graduates to teach and to lead in the diverse, multi-religious, and multicultural contexts of today’s world.

### *1.3. Goals and Outcomes of the Program*

The goals of the PhD program reflect the mission and vision of the Seminary in general and purposes of the doctoral program in particular. The learning outcomes identify advanced and integrated knowledge, skills, and competencies that a graduate of the Union PhD program is expected to be able to demonstrate.

**GOAL I.** To enable students to acquire comprehensive knowledge of the disciplines of study with specialization in a particular field. Students will develop an expert’s knowledge of the specific topic of their research and of the subject matter of the dissertation. They will be able to do research at the highest level in that field.

Outcomes:

1. Demonstrates comprehensive knowledge in and a general mastery of their major field.
2. Demonstrates expertise in the specific area of the minor field.

GOAL II. To provide students with the skills needed to engage in original research, writing, learning, and teaching at the college, university and seminary level in their field of theological expertise; and to contribute to the body of knowledge in the field through research and publications.

Outcomes:

1. Demonstrates a capacity to produce original, publication-worthy research and writing that contributes to the knowledge and advancement of the field.
2. Demonstrates an ability to teach effectively at the graduate and undergraduate level.

GOAL III. To engage students in a sustained exploration of the connections and interactions between the objective disciplines of religious studies and the more existentially engaged disciplines generally described as Christian theology.

Outcomes:

1. Demonstrates knowledge of the distinction and relation between the subject matter and methods of theological and religious studies.
2. Demonstrates an ability to engage critically in interdisciplinary discourse.

GOAL IV. To equip students with a dual competency that enables them to teach undergraduate courses in a field other than the area of their specific expertise.

Outcomes:

1. Demonstrates advanced knowledge of contents and methods in a field other than their own.
2. Demonstrates an ability to teach effectively at the undergraduate level in a field other than their own.

GOAL V. To cultivate in students a commitment to communicate their knowledge and to interpret the subject matter of their discipline with sensitivity to particular academic, religious, and cultural contexts.

Outcome:

1. Demonstrates an ability to interpret and to communicate their knowledge for different cultures and publics.

#### *1.4. Faculty Authorship*

The description of the Ph.D. program that follows, with its procedures, policies and protocols, is authored by the faculty of Union Theological Seminary. A majority vote of the full-time faculty of the Seminary is needed for major revisions

### *1.5. Names and Terms Used in the Program*

The Ph.D. program at Union is subdivided into five distinct fields: Bible, History, Interreligious Engagement, Theology and Ethics, and Practical Theology. The Director of the Ph.D. Program assists the Academic Dean in overseeing the administration of the program. The Doctoral Committee resolves appeals and problems that may arise within the program and consists of two full-time professors, the Academic Dean and the Director of the PhD Program. The Doctoral Admissions Committee assists in selecting students for admission into the program.

## **2. FACULTY PROCEDURES**

### *2.1. Advisors*

Faculty members act as primary or secondary advisors, usually according to the major-minor structure of the respective PhD student. After completion of the comprehensive examinations, the director of a student's dissertation, who may or may not be one of the student's initial advisors, becomes his or her advisor. Normally, the director of a student's dissertation will be a full-time Union faculty member. The primary and secondary advisors will agree on which one takes the lead for the dissertation.

### *2.2. Program Planning Conference*

In the first semester of residency the advisors of each new student will have a conference with their advisee(s) to frame an overall vision of the student's program, review the student's preparation for it, and outline a course of studies in a PhD Program Plan (see the form in APPENDIX I). If any aspect of the student's educational preparation for the doctoral program at Union so warrants, the faculty members conducting the conference may recommend or stipulate remedial courses. Such a stipulation must be put in writing and be part of the PhD Program Plan. This Conference should decide how the two advisors will cooperate in the advising of the student.

### *2.3. Yearly Assessment of Students*

At least once each semester, advisors are to meet with their advisees. These meetings are occasions for the advisors and students to assess progress in course work and language acquisition, and to explore topics for comprehensive examinations and the focus of the dissertation. At the conclusion of each academic year, students will do a self-assessment of their academic year using the *Student's Self-Assessment Form* (see the link in APPENDIX I). This self-assessment is due by **May 31st**, and without its submission the student's registration will be placed on hold. This self-assessment will be part of a *Student Progress Conference*, which needs to take place no later than **September 15th**. Based on this *Student Progress Conference*, the advisors fill out the *Advisor's Assessment Review* form and submit it by **September 30th** (See the links in APPENDIX I). This form is submitted electronically to the Director of the PhD Program and will be inserted into the student's ePortfolio. These assessments in the ePortfolio of each student provide

the material for the meeting in October and November of the students with the Director of the PhD Program.

If an advisor believes that a student is not in good standing or is concerned with a lack of progress or achievement, the advisor should note the student's lack of progress in the *Advisor's Assessment* form (see below, 4). The advisor should indicate whether or not the student should be placed on warning.

#### *2.4. Mentoring Comprehensive Examinations*

Advisors of students oversee their comprehensive examinations. Comprehensive examinations have three main functions: they ensure a broad knowledge of the field, test the essential academic skills of the prospective scholar, and funnel a student's knowledge toward the definition of a dissertation topic and a familiarity with the material that will feed into the development of a dissertation proposal.

The faculty of each field of study sets the requirements for the comprehensive examinations and determines its own pattern according to the exigencies of the discipline. The fields are to review the templates for Comps on a regular basis, revise them as necessary and submit an electronic copy to the Director of the PhD Program, who will make them available on the UTS website.

Comps may be completed in various modes including timed exams, oral exams, take-home exams, essays, or combinations of these. At least one exam should have a major oral component. No comprehensive examination will constitute a proposal for the dissertation. However, comprehensive examinations are normally meant to lead into writing the dissertation, in consultation with the advisor(s). Comps should be designed in such a way that they can be completed in one academic year (plus summer sessions). On an average, this means that each comprehensive examination should be able to be completed in three months or, if longer, another exam may be completed in less than three months. Advisors who assist students in designing their comps should be attentive to the balance of the scope and time of each comprehensive examination.

Readers for each exam should be chosen by the student and the advisor in consultation with other faculty as needed. The faculty advisor, in collaboration with the student, designs the overall plan of the comps presents the Comps Prospectus to the field for its review and approval and reports the approval in writing to the Director of the PhD Program. It is then uploaded to the student's ePortfolio.

There are two modes of administering the Comps:

a) Print: The advisor deposits the exam to the Registrar, who then delivers the exam to the student. The student returns the completed exam to the Registrar. The Registrar distributes the exam to the First and Second Readers for evaluation. The two Readers have one month to grade the exam as Pass or Fail, and the First Reader returns the exams to the Registrar.

b) Electronically: If the exam is delivered directly to the student electronically, a clearly designated copy is sent to the Registrar, who in turn sends it to the first and second readers. The student returns the completed Comp exam electronically to the First and Second readers in the required time. The First Reader sends the examination to the Registrar.

In both cases, the First Reader consults the Second Reader for his or her grade (Pass or Fail) and evaluation, fills out the *Comp Exam Form* (see APPENDIX I) and submits it within one week to the Registrar and Ph.D. Program Director, with copies for the student and the advisor. The evaluation of the First Reader should clearly note the relevant identifiers of the exam. If the student has not passed, the specific grounds for failure should be clearly stated.

If a student does not pass a comprehensive examination, it should be administered again. Prior to the administration of the second exam, both readers should have a conversation with the student. Following this conversation, the first reader should report in writing to the Director of the PhD Program that the student failed the first exam. In addition, as appropriate, the first reader may include in the report a note on any special factors that may have played a role in the case, and any specific measures that will be taken in the second administration of the exam to respond to those factors. Normally the second exam should be analogous to the first. A third reader should be involved in this second exam.

Should a student fail the same comprehensive examination a second time (as determined by a majority of the readers), both the student and the readers should prepare a report for the Director of the PhD Program for submission to the Doctoral Committee, which will review whether the appropriate procedures were followed in designing, administering and evaluating the first and second exams. The options of the committee are a) on the basis of evidence provided by the relevant major and minor fields, give the student a pass on solid grounds, other than the exam itself, supporting the student's knowledge; b) with approval of the relevant field, decide that a third exam should be administered, possibly involving a different constellation of readers; or c) decide that the student should be dismissed from the Union Doctoral Program. In the event of a third exam, two of the three readers must agree on a pass, and its results will determine whether the student remains in the Union Doctoral Program. The results of this process following a second failure of a field exam will be final and not subject to further appeal.

When the student has passed a comprehensive examination, the first reader is to fill out the *Comp Exam Form* (see APPENDIX I) and submit it within one week to the Director of the PhD Program and the student's advisor.

### *2.5. Change of Primary Advisor*

In the event of a faculty member's departure from the Seminary (e.g., retirement, acceptance of another appointment) or his or her withdrawal of support for a student, the Field, after consultation with that faculty member, recommends to the Director of the Ph.D. Program and the Academic Dean arrangements for his or her student(s). The Dean, however, is not bound by the field's recommendation.

Students may also petition the Director of the Ph.D. Program for a change of advisor. The petition should include, a) the reasons for making the change, and b) the name of the faculty member who has expressed his or her availability to assume the position. The Ph.D. Director will consult with the Doctoral Committee and recommend that the Dean appoint another faculty member as advisor, in consultation with the student and the new advisor.

### *2.6. Doctoral Committee*

The Academic Dean in consultation with the Director of the PhD Program convenes the Doctoral Committee in situations that require the resolution of serious problems and appeals. The Doctoral Committee is composed of two faculty members appointed by the Academic Dean, the Director of the PhD Program and the Academic Dean. Its role is to resolve appeals and problems that may arise within the program.

### *2.7. Doctoral Admissions Committee*

The Doctoral Admissions Committee is composed of one faculty person from each of the fields of study, one additional faculty member elected at large, and the Dean and President serving *ex officio*. The task of the Doctoral Admissions Committee is to create two ranked lists of students from those who have applied for admission, 1) a ranked list of the top tier students corresponding to the number of available slots for doctoral admission in the given year, with the President and Dean publicizing to the faculty the number of available slots before the admissions process begins; and 2) a ranked waiting list of students who can be contacted in the order of their ranking upon the withdrawal of candidates from the first tier list. If an available slot is not filled in a given year by a student in the top tier list or the waiting list, that open slot shall be added to the available slots the following year if financial resources suffice.

*Members of the Admissions Committee.* Each field, in whatever manner it decides, selects its own representative. The representative of each field need not have read the files of all the applicants in the other areas, but he or she must read the files of all the applicants short-listed by all other field before the committee selects the students to whom admission may be offered.

*Procedures.* Two weeks before the meeting for the ranked nomination of candidates for admission, the fields will decide upon a short list of their top candidates, ideally sharing with their colleagues their judgment of those candidates' ranking. At a maximum a field will not submit a short list of candidates that is greater than or equal to the total number of slots available for doctoral admission in a given year. A field is not required to recommend a candidate.

*Timeline.* The deadline for applications is set at January 1st of the year of entry. Faculty members should read the folders during the month of January, and candidates for each field should be decided during the first field meeting of the semester or by the second week of February. The member of the Doctoral Admissions Committee selected by each field should read the folders of the applicants short-listed by the other fields in

mid-February, as the Committee meets during the fourth week of February to make the decision on applicants following a general faculty discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the candidates short-listed by each field.

### *2.8. Teaching Fellows*

A teaching fellow from among the Ph.D. students works closely with a Union Professor on an average of 12 hours per week. The duties of the teaching fellow are to be clearly drawn up in a written memo shared by the professor and the student. A class assistant is normally a Ph.D. student who works 3 hours per week. The stipends for a Union PhD student working as a Teaching Fellow or as a class assistant are specified in the respective *Memorandum on the Admission to the Ph.D. Program*. In both cases one of the principal goals of this arrangement is formation of the student in the role of teacher.

Ordinarily after the first year of course work, a Ph.D. student may work as a teaching fellow with one of Union's Professors. Students are expected to work as a teaching fellow in at least one course during the Ph.D. program; they normally serve as Teaching Fellows in not more than six courses during their years as a student. This may be adjusted in cases where the student and the advisor concur that such work is conducive to the student moving forward in the program; in this situation, a petition is submitted in writing and co-signed, and the Director of the Ph.D. program approves. Students may only work as a teaching fellow with the permission of their advisor. Students who serve as Teaching Fellows are required to take the course in "Teaching Theology and Religion" before or during assuming this role. Faculty members who work with a Teaching Fellow are to submit an Assessment of a Teaching Fellow to the Academic Office at the end of the semester (see the link in APPENDIX I). It will be uploaded to the student's ePortfolio.

## **3. STUDENT PROCEDURES**

### *3.1. Major Specialization and Minor Concentration*

Applicants to the PhD program identify and describe the rationale for their choice of the major field of specialization. If they have a sense of a minor field they are encouraged to describe that as well." According the major-minor structure, they will usually have two advisors, pursue course work and comprehensive exams in both areas, and write a dissertation in one area in a way that integrates the other into the research. Students are expected to master the subject matter that will qualify them for doing research and teaching on the graduate level in their major and undergraduate teaching in their minor.

### *3.2. Program Planning*

First-year doctoral students are required to meet with their primary advisors, in person, in a Program Planning Conference prior course registration for the Fall semesters. This Planning Conference will frame an overall vision of the program, review the student's preparation for the program, and outline a course of studies in a Program Plan

(see link in APPENDIX I). Thereafter, the students meet with their advisors at least once each semester. If any aspect of the student's educational preparation for the doctoral program at Union so warrants, the advisor conducting the conference may recommend or stipulate remedial courses.

### *3.3. Residency Requirements, Extended Residence, and Matriculation and Facilities*

Students admitted to the doctoral program should pursue advanced study for two academic years of residency (course work) at the Seminary, while working under the advisement of their primary and secondary advisor. If the student holds the S.T.M. from Union, residency may be completed in one year of full-time study.

After completing the residency requirements, PhD students must register for Extended Residence (UT 400). After one semester of Extended Residency, students register for Matriculation and Facilities (UT 410). They pay a reduced tuition called the "Extended Residence or Matriculation & Facilities Fee" (ERMF). If a student is not able to pay these fees, he or she can apply for a Leave of Absence (for each semester, not more than a total of two years).

### *3.4. Semestral Meetings with Advisor(s)*

At least once each semester, doctoral students are to meet with their advisor(s). This meeting is an occasion for students to assess their progress in course work and language acquisition. This is also an opportunity to raise any personal matters that may significantly affect their studies and to discuss their calendar for completing the program. If at the end of a given semester a student has not met the expected timeline of the program, the advisor will indicate to the Director of the PhD Program, the Academic Dean and the Registrar that the student has met the conditions to be placed on warning. (See below, 4.2.)

### *3.5. Course Credits*

Students will complete 43 points (credits) in course work. Ordinarily the course work is divided between the major and minor as follows: 9 courses in the major [27 points]; 4 courses in the minor [12 points]; four bi-weekly, 2 hour semester-long doctoral seminars valued at one point per semester [4 points]. The ratio between major-minor courses of 9 to 4 may be adjusted in consultation with the advisors in either direction for reasons that are particular to each student and his or her project, provided that the purposes of having a major and minor are served.

During residency, students should take at least three (3) and no more than twelve (12) points of graduate work in another institution, normally at one of the institutions affiliated with the Seminary: Columbia University's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, General Theological Seminary, Jewish Theological Seminary, Fordham University (Department of Theology and Graduate School of Religion and Religious Education), Drew University Theological School, St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

Candidates majoring in Bible or focusing their studies on Early Church History may take up to sixteen (16) points at affiliated institutions because of the particular need for the study of ancient languages. As their particular research and ancient language needs warrant, biblical PhD students may also, with their primary advisor's written approval, take more than 16 cross-registration credits at partner or non-partner schools.

### *3.6. Doctoral Seminar*

The Doctoral Seminar, taken by PhD students in their first two years of study (but also open to other PhD students), helps to integrate students into a community of learning that binds them together across different fields of specialization. Typically, the doctoral seminar meets for two hours, six times a semester for a total of 2 points per academic year. The Director of the PhD Program coordinates the leadership of the seminar.

### *3.7. Language Examinations*

Each candidate must become proficient in reading scholarly materials in two modern languages other than English, frequently Spanish, French or German. Both modern language requirements must be completed before a student begins comprehensive exams.

Other modern languages may be substituted for Spanish, German or French if the student and his/her advisors make the argument that they are more useful for the student's scholarly research (to be approved by the Director of the PhD Program and the Academic Dean). Students are encouraged to acquire knowledge of these modern languages before entering the program. Students who have not done so may meet the language requirement by passing an examination administered by Union on dates stated in the academic calendar. The timing of this requirement does not apply to classical languages such as Hebrew, Greek, or Latin that are required for certain individual programs. (Regarding specific language needs of Candidates in Hebrew Bible/Old Testament and Early Church History, see above 3.5.)

### *3.8. PhD Workshops and Social Gatherings*

Doctoral students participate in activities and events that are part of the PhD community and designed to contribute to a strong and vibrant communal life of doctoral students Union Theological Seminary. These activities and events may include "Practical Skill Workshops", "PhD-Soirées", social gatherings, panel discussions, communal dinners and the like. They are prepared or coordinated by the Director of the PhD Program, with the help of a student assistant.

### *3.9. Teaching Fellowships*

Normally during a student's second and third year in the program, he or she may work as a Teaching Fellow. Students who serve as Teaching Fellows are required to take the course in "Teaching Theology and Religion" before or during assuming this role.

### 3.10. *Comprehensive Examinations*

The functions of the comprehensive exams are (1) to ensure broad knowledge of the major field of specialization and competency in the minor field of concentration; (2) to test the student's academic skills in research and writing; and (3) to provide knowledge and resources that will inform the student's dissertation topic and proposal. Comprehensive exams are graded (pass or fail).

The student initiates the planning with his or her advisor of the Comps Prospectus. Preparation of the Comps Prospectus moves through stages of design, lining up the professors who will serve as Readers, presentation to and approval by the Field, reporting the approval in writing to the Director of the PhD Program, uploading to the student's ePortfolio (see above, 2.4.).

PhD students are expected to begin their comprehensive exams after they have finished their coursework and completed their modern language requirements. They should pass their four comprehensive examinations by the end of a 12-15 month period after coursework, that is, by September 1st after their third year of residency.

The faculty members in the fields in which they are taken approve the prospectus for the comprehensive examinations. The student's faculty advisor(s) supervises the comprehensive exams and reports the results within one week to the Registrar and the Director of the PhD Program.

The four comprehensive examinations are distributed among their major and minor as follows:

Option A: 3 comprehensive exams in the major field; 1 comprehensive exam in the minor field; or

Option B: 2 exams in his or her major, 1 exam in the minor, and 1 comprehensive exam that combines the major and minor fields.

If the Comp is administered in print, the student submits the completed exam to the Registrar, who then transmits it to the Readers. If the Comp is administered electronically, the student submits the completed exam to the first and second readers, who will send the examination to the Registrar (see above, 2.4).

### 3.11. *The Master of Philosophy Degree (MPhil)*

After satisfactorily completing the four comprehensive examinations and all other requirements stated above, the candidate will be awarded the degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil) at the next commencement. Students must have completed all the requirements for the degree a month prior to graduation in order to participate in the ceremony.

### *3.12. Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)*

After the MPhil requirements have been completed, the student becomes a candidate for the PhD and prepares a proposal for a dissertation that must be approved by the student's dissertation committee. The dissertation committee is usually made up of three Union professors, including the student's advisor(s), and one outside reader from another university, seminary, or graduate school who is especially competent in the topic of the dissertation.

### *3.13. The Dissertation Proposal*

Ordinarily, students write their dissertations in their major field of specialization. The dissertation may and frequently will be enhanced by the minor field or involve some kind of dialogue among fields. Normally, the dissertation proposal is submitted within six months following the completion of the comprehensive examinations. The student drafts a proposal, which the principal advisor(s) examine. When the advisor(s) believe the proposal is ready for formal review by the dissertation committee, they set up a hearing with the student and at least two other members of the faculty who will be members of the dissertation committee. The committee is chosen by the student in consultation with the advisor(s). After this committee approves the proposal, the primary advisor fills out the *Proposal for Doctoral Dissertation Form* and submits it within one week after the proposal approval to the Director of the PhD Program and to the Registrar (see the link in APPENDIX I). The student writes the dissertation under the direction of the advisors and the professors on the dissertation committee.

### *3.14. The Dissertation*

While working on the dissertation, candidates are obliged to develop with their advisors a calendar of regular contact and a timetable for completion of their work. The advisors, in turn, have the responsibility to set up with the student the procedures and schedule of writing to be followed in developing the dissertation: i.e., meetings, completion of drafts, etc. The advisors assume responsibility for working out difficulties should they arise.

### *3.15. The Dissertation Defense*

When the advisor(s), in consultation with the student, agree that the dissertation is ready for defense, they contact the members of the dissertation committee and determine the date. Ordinarily, the student's primary advisor, two other faculty members, and one professor from another graduate school or theological faculty constitute the examining committee or board. The student should prepare a copy of the dissertation for each member of the committee. The members of the examining board should have the completed dissertation in their hands at least three weeks prior to the defense. **The dissertation defense must take place at least three weeks prior to Commencement.** The dissertation defense must be passed and the dissertation fully completed, received by ProQuest, and reported to the Registrar one full week prior to graduation in order to participate in the ceremony. It is important that the steps for electronic submission of the

dissertation be calculated in scheduling the defense and the possible recommendations for revision by the examining board.

### *3.16. Electronic Submission of Dissertation to the Library*

After the dissertation is successfully defended, the final copies of the dissertation are submitted electronically to the ProQuest dissertation and thesis database. This is a requirement for the degree program. It is highly recommended that students meet in February or early March with the Associate Academic Dean and/or library staff to review the submission process. Students may also submit their dissertations to Academic Commons, Columbia University's institutional repository.

At least a month prior to the submission deadline, students should meet with the associate academic dean and/or Burke Library director to discuss the ProQuest submission form, copyright, trends in scholarly communication and other ways to disseminate your research (e.g., institutional repositories). Librarians receive specialized training in these fields and are valuable partners in the dissertation writing process.

Students should prepare their dissertations for deposit to ProQuest by saving them as a PDF, and use a citation style approved by his or her advisor (Chicago, SBL, APA, etc.). Should questions arise about citations or style guides, the Burke Library staff can assist.

After meeting with the associate academic dean and/or library director, students should create an account on the ProQuest submission website. An email will be sent to the student confirming that an account has been created. This should be done well before the dissertation is due.

After a student's committee has approved a dissertation and before the submission deadline, the student should go to ProQuest's ETD website <http://www.etsadmin.com/>, complete a submission form and submit a PDF of her/his dissertation. The Union registrar will receive notification of the deposit. No diploma will be issued until the electronic submission process is completed.

### *3.17. Completion of the Program*

Students can finish the PhD program in four to five years. They are expected to finish within seven years. However, a student who has not defended the dissertation after seven years may be granted an extension by an appeal to the Director of the PhD Program, which is to be submitted by **June 30th**. The appeal needs to be supported in writing by the student's dissertation director. It must also be approved by the Academic Dean. An extension may be granted for one year at a time, recorded in the Academic Office, and may be renewed up to the tenth year. If after ten years the student has not presented the dissertation for defense, he or she is dismissed from the program.

### 3.18. Assessment

Assessment of student learning and progress through the program is a continuous and integral part of the doctoral program from inception to completion. Students regularly maintain ePortfolios that provide direct (performance-based) and indirect (perception-based) evidence of their learning and academic success as well as their progress through the stages and requirements of the program. The ePortfolios contain the student's Admission Essay, Program Planning Plan, the Yearly Transcript, yearly *Students' Self-Assessment* forms, yearly *Advisor's Assessment* forms, a substantial paper written each year, the Comps prospectus, evaluations of teaching fellowships, evaluations of the comprehensive exams, and the dissertation prospectus. (See the forms in APPENDIX I and the ePortfolio Checklist in APPENDIX III).

Throughout the program, ePortfolios are continually updated and reviewed in accordance with an outcome and evidence based assessment process. The process begins in the first semester with the deposit into the student's ePortfolio of the *curriculum vitae* and application essay. The advisor(s) review these documents in preparation for the Program Planning Conference described above. The student then deposits the Program Plan, signed by the student and advisor(s), into the ePortfolio. The student and advisor may update or modify the Program Plan and deposit updates into the ePortfolio as warranted.

At the end of each academic year (no later than **May 31st**), students must complete a *Yearly Self-Assessment* form and submit it to the Director of the PhD Program and the advisor(s). A hold will be placed on the student's registration if these materials have not been inserted into the student's ePortfolio. The self-assessment requires that students evaluate the proficiencies identified in the program's desired learning outcomes. Thereafter, no later than **September 15th**, students will confer with advisor(s) in a Student Progress Conference. The advisors will review the current contents of the ePortfolios, assess the student's proficiencies in light of the learning outcomes, and determine if the student is progressing through the program in a timely manner. They then prepare the Advisor's Assessment Review and submit same to the Director of the PhD Program and to his administrative assistant who will deposit same into the ePortfolio (no later than **September 30th**).

During the fall (October-November), the Program Director will review the advisors' Assessment Review (and ePortfolio contents, if indicated) and will confer with each student individually. The Program Director may add comments to the Yearly Assessment Report, in which case, a dated and updated copy will be deposited into the student's ePortfolio for future reference.

After the MPhil is conferred and during the writing of dissertation, the Doctoral Students the dissertation director continues to monitor student progress informally. If the dissertation director becomes aware of any impediments to timely and satisfactory completion of the program, the Director of the PhD Program must be notified. In response, the Program Director may consult with the advisor(s) and/or student or initiate action before the Doctoral Committee.

Either in conjunction with the dissertation defense or before commencement, a Final Assessment Report, that is also learning outcome-oriented and evidence-based, is prepared by the advisor(s) and submitted to the Program Director. The same is to be deposited into the ePortfolio by the Program Director's administrative assistant.

#### 4. REVIEW OF STUDENTS

##### 4.1. *Good Standing (Satisfactory Academic Progress—SAP)*<sup>1</sup>

Students remain in good standing in the program as long as one of the following developments does not occur:

- a student has not finished coursework and fulfilled the requirements of two modern languages by the beginning of the fifth semester in residence;
- comprehensive examinations have not been completed one academic year after a student has finished coursework;
- a dissertation proposal has not been submitted by September 1st of the year following reception of the M.Phil.;
- a dissertation proposal has not been approved by the beginning of the second semester of the year following the reception of the M.Phil.

##### 4.2. *Warning followed by Interruption of Financial Support*

When one of these eventualities occurs, a student is referred to the Doctoral Committee with a view toward the possibility of being placed on warning for one semester. When a student is placed on warning, it is expected that all deficiencies will be remedied and no new deficiencies incurred.

If the student has not cleared up all deficiencies after one semester on warning, the doctoral committee will consider whether that student's financial aid will be interrupted until good standing is restored.

##### 4.3. *Extension*

On the petition of the student's advisor accompanied by a rationale, the warning period may be extended for a second semester without interruption of financial support if, in the judgment of the Ph.D. Program Director, substantial progress is being made towards remedying deficiencies, or if extraordinary circumstances warrant an extension. This petition is to be made within 10 days after the end of the first period of warning.

After the second semester on warning, financial aid can no longer be extended to a student. But the advisor can make a second and last request for a continuation of the student in the program, which will add up to three semesters on warning, after which the student is liable to dismissal from the program.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Student Handbook*, "Financial Aid," #6: "Academic Progress and Standards," especially "Satisfactory Academic Progress." Note that Union's standard for grades is somewhat higher than the government's.

#### *4.4. Appeal*

Dismissal may be appealed to the Doctoral Committee to decide the issue of either dismissal or specific requirements to be accomplished in a specific time period.

#### *4.5. Dismissal from the Ph.D. Program*

A student who fails to meet stated expectations that are stipulated during the probationary period and the process outlined above is liable to dismissal from doctoral studies program.

To sum up the negative slide toward dismissal, it begins with warning ratified by the Doctoral Committee that can be carried for one semester. The next step is a semester on warning with interruption of funding. This interruption of financial aid may be forestalled on the request and rationale of the student's advisor. The third step is a final semester on warning before dismissal. This dismissal can be appealed for one additional semester during which all deficiencies are to be remedied.

### **5. OTHER MATTERS**

#### *5.1. Housing*

Doctoral students will be eligible for five years of Seminary housing (two of which must be during Residency), with two one-year extensions for students who are making good progress in meeting degree requirements. In addition, under special circumstances, a student may apply for an additional one-year extension at a higher rate. The Academic Dean, in conversation with the Director of Housing, will make this decision upon the recommendation of the Ph.D. Program Director. This policy applies to new students and students currently living in Seminary housing. The procedures for applying for an extension are as follows:

1. The basis for housing extensions will be academic progress in the degree program. That is, it must be evident that the student requesting the extension has made reasonable progress in meeting degree requirements and further access to Seminary housing will facilitate further progress.
2. To request a housing extension, the student must send a letter to the Director of Housing by March 1st that has been endorsed by the student's major advisor. (Students must give their letters to faculty advisors by February 1st to obtain the necessary endorsements before the March 1st deadline. Housing extensions will normally be considered only at the February Field meetings.)
3. The student's letter must give the reasons for requesting a housing extension and give complete details of the student's progress to date in meeting degree requirements and say what requirements he/ she intends to meet in the following year.
4. The Academic Dean, in conference with the Director of Housing, will approve the request for an extension only if the faculty advisor or dissertation director and the Field have endorsed the request on the basis of academic progress.
5. If for any reason the Academic Dean is unable to approve the request

administratively, the matter may be referred to the Doctoral Committee for review.

6. The Director of Housing will inform students and faculty advisors of the outcome of extension requests no later than March 31st.

### *5.2. Leave of Absence*

The requirement to be enrolled in the Seminary continuously until graduation is normative. Students who are faced with extraordinary personal circumstances, however, should consult the rules and provisions for a leave of absence from the Seminary. Leaves of absence are negotiated through the office of the Associate Dean for Student Affairs and approved by the Academic Dean. Generally speaking, the “Policies and Procedures for Leave of Absence,” “The Process for Withdrawing from Union,” and the “Procedures for Re-Admission” that are found in the *Student Handbook* also apply to students in the Ph.D. Program.

### *5.3. Dossier Service*

Prior to graduation PhD students are encouraged to set up a portfolio with “Interfolio,” a dossier service that will store information that can be used in applying for jobs. The electronic address is <http://www.interfolio.com>. One may gather letters of recommendation and other files into packets that may be sent out by the service.

## APPENDIX I.

### Links to important Forms

PhD Program Plan (for First Year Students, to be submitted **within one week** after the *Program Planning Conference*):  
<http://myunion.utsnyc.edu/file/registrar/PhD-Program-Plan-2016-17.docx>

Student's Self-Evaluation form (to be submitted by **May 31st**):  
<http://myunion.utsnyc.edu/file/registrar/PhD-Yearly-Self-Assessment-Form-2016-17.docx>

PHD Adviser ASSESSMENT FORM (to be submitted by **September 30th**): <http://myunion.utsnyc.edu/file/registrar/PHD-Adviser-ASSESSMENT-FORM-2016-17.doc>

PhD Comp Exam Report Form (to be submitted within one week after the respective Comp):  
<http://myunion.utsnyc.edu/file/registrar/PhD-Comp-Exam-Report-Form-2016-17.docx>

Proposal for Doctoral Dissertation Form (to be submitted within one week after the proposal approval):  
<http://myunion.utsnyc.edu/file/registrar/Proposal-for-Doctoral-Dissertation-Form-2016-17.docx>

Doctoral Dissertation Defense Form (to be submitted within one week after the Dissertation defense):  
<http://myunion.utsnyc.edu/file/registrar/Doctoral-Dissertation-Defense-Form-2016-17.docx>

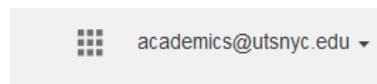
Teaching Fellow Evaluation Form (to be submitted by the professor in charge at the end of the respective semester, together with the general grading of students):  
<http://myunion.utsnyc.edu/file/registrar/Teaching-Fellow-Evaluation-Form-2016-17.docx>

## APPENDIX II.

### HOW TO ACCESS YOUR ePORTFOLIO

Every UTS student has an ePortfolio: a folder created by the Academic Office. That folder lives in the student's Google Drive associated with her or his utsnyc.edu email address (not the Drive connected to any personal Gmail account). If you cannot access your ePortfolio after following these instructions, contact Chris McFadden at [cmcfadden@utsnyc.edu](mailto:cmcfadden@utsnyc.edu) or write to [academics@utsnyc.edu](mailto:academics@utsnyc.edu) for assistance.

To access your Google Drive, go to your utsnyc.edu email inbox. In the upper right hand corner of the screen there is an icon of nine small squares. Float your cursor over the icon to see this is the "Google Apps" icon.

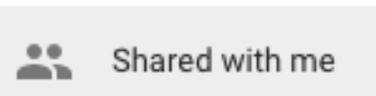


Click on the "Google Apps" icon. A menu of apps will appear including the Google Drive icon.



Click on the Drive icon. Your list of Google Drive folders is displayed.

On the left of this screen, click on the folder named "Shared with me."



Look for your ePortfolio in the "Shared with me" folder. The folder is named like this:

[Your degree] ePortfolio - (2015) LastName, FirstName - ab1234 - JW

(your entering year) your name  
- your UNI - your advisor's initials)

Click on the ePortfolio folder to open the contents of your ePortfolio.

#### How to Upload a Document to Your ePortfolio

Click on your ePortfolio to open it. In the upper-left corner of the screen, find the "NEW" button (it's red or blue). Click the "NEW" button, and click "File upload" from the pull-down menu. Browse for and select your file. In a few moments, an upload status box will say "1 upload complete" and you're done! You're uploaded file will be shared automatically with your Assessment team.



If the prompt "Upload to shared folder?" pops up, click "Upload and share" or just "Share" and you're ePortfolio will be automatically shared with your Assessment team. (When the "upload complete" box pops up, just close the box by clicking on the X.)

You may access your ePortfolio at any time.

#### Warning for device users:

If you are using Gmail in a web browser on a device such as a smartphone or tablet, you won't have access to Google Apps (you won't see the Google Apps square icon in your inbox). Download the free Google Drive app for your device and sign in to your UNI Gmail account, and then you can access your Drive and ePortfolio directly.

## APPENDIX III.

### **ePortfolio Checklist**

These are the items that should be in each Doctoral Student's ePortfolio:

- Admissions Essay [Academic Office]
- Program Plan [submitted by the student, within one week after the *Program Planning Conference*]
- Student's Yearly Self-Assessment form [submitted by PhD student, due May 31st]
- Faculty Advisor's Yearly Assessment form [submitted by primary advisor, due September 30th]
- Yearly Transcript [Academic Office, by September 30th]
- At least one substantial paper written during the past year [Submitted by PhD Student, by May 31st]
- The Comps prospectus [Submitted by the advisor, within one week after the approval by the respective field]
- Evaluations of Teaching Fellowships [Submitted by professors at the end of the respective semester]
- Comps evaluations [Submitted by Comps first Reader, within one week after the respective Comp]
- Approved Dissertation proposal [Submitted by advisor within one week after the proposal approval]
- Doctoral Dissertation Defense Form [Submitted by dissertation director within one week after the Dissertation defense]
- Current *curriculum vitae* [by the student, by **May 31st**]
- Students' applications for an extension (or a leave of absence) and approvals/dismissals by the Director of the PhD Program and the Academic Dean [Submitted by Academic Office]