



Puritan Reformed

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Doctoral Program Handbook

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Disclaimers

This Handbook includes policies and procedures pertinent to the Doctoral Program at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary. Prospective and registered students should consult the Handbook throughout the admission process and their course of study. Please visit <https://prts.edu/academics-aid/doctoral-program/> for the most recent edition of the Handbook.

This Handbook is not an agreement or an offer of admission to the program, and Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary reserves the right to change or correct any material herein.

Welcome from the President

Dear doctoral student,

Welcome to the doctoral program at Puritan Reformed. This Handbook serves as your guide through a journey marked by research, writing, and other scholarly pursuits in service to both the church and the academy.

At the core of our program lies the dual emphasis on academic and spiritual formation. We aim to meet the demand for a comprehensive doctoral experience, blending academic rigor with biblical piety—a synthesis we express as *de pietate cum scientia conjungenda*. This approach is intended to equip you for ministry in both teaching and preaching roles. Recognized internationally and supported by esteemed scholars, our program stands as a beacon for the global church of Christ.

As you embark on this journey, embrace the challenges ahead with vigor and curiosity, relying on the guidance of the Lord and the Holy Spirit. Know that you are not alone in this pursuit. Our faculty, staff, and fellow scholars are here to support you every step of the way.

We are thrilled that you've chosen to join us in this scholarly endeavor. May your time here be intellectually stimulating and spiritually enriching, setting the stage for an extraordinary chapter in your academic vocation, and may your contributions to fields such as Biblical Studies, Systematic Theology, Historical Theology, or Homiletics be a blessing to many.

Welcome, and may your studies be of service to Christ and His church in profound ways.

Warm regards,



Adriaan C. Neele, Ph.D., President

Welcome from the Doctoral Program Director

It is my pleasure to introduce you to the doctoral program of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary. Our fully-funded program is designed to meet the widespread demand for a comprehensive doctoral program that combines academic excellence with biblical piety (*de pietate cum scientia conjungenda*). The program's integration of robust academic and spiritual formation promotes the organic development of holistic theological knowledge and prepares the student to serve both the academy and the church through research-driven teaching, preaching, and writing.

The doctoral program is served by its own specifically appointed faculty and is enriched by the participation of scholars from around the world who are academically distinguished and spiritually gifted. Your supervisor will work closely with you in your *academic formation*—advising you in your coursework, dissertation research, teaching, and publications—as well as in your *spiritual formation*—encouraging your sanctification, the integration of faith and learning, and a life of fellowship with the Triune God.

This holistic formation is set in and promoted by the culture and community of the doctoral program. Interaction with your peers in the classroom, in seminar discussions, in research centers tied to PRTS, and in regular gatherings of the doctoral cohort will nurture your academic and spiritual development. No less importantly, this community is a source of encouragement and refreshment, fostering friendships and cooperation that will last long after you complete the program. The diversity of the doctoral cohort, composed of students from around the world, will further enrich your formation as you learn and grow alongside fellow believers with richly varied cultural backgrounds, ecclesial settings, and experiences.

We hope and pray that your education, research, and contributions in your field (Biblical Studies, Historical Theology, or Systematic Theology), shaped by the program's commitment to the unity of faith and learning and pursued in fellowship with other believers, will bear rich fruit to His glory in the global church and the academy.

Warmly,



Daniel C. Timmer, Ph.D., Director of the Doctoral Program

General Description

In preparing students to serve Christ and His church through biblical, experiential, and practical ministry, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary offers an accredited, rigorous, fully-funded, and internationally recognized doctoral program. This handbook articulates the rationale, requirements, and envisioned results for the Doctor of Philosophy program.

The various dimensions of the doctoral program rest upon and reflect its foundational commitment to the academic *and* spiritual formation of the student. The importance of this commitment is evident in the growing interest in full-orbed doctoral formation that integrates academic rigor and biblical piety (*de pietate cum scientia coniungenda*). As an institution, and specifically in its doctoral program, PRTS seeks to promote and continue the Reformed and Puritan understanding of learning as inseparable from piety, exemplified in figures such as John Calvin, William Perkins, William Ames, Gisbertus Voetius, Archibald Alexander, and many others. This integrative approach to academic excellence and biblical piety is evident in the program's admission requirements, academic standards, pedagogy, and spiritual formation components.

The doctoral program is academically rigorous, offering a comprehensive program with high, measurable, and internationally peer-reviewed and accredited academic standards. The academic vigor of the program is further enhanced by the use of expert adjunct faculty serving as subject experts and dissertation co-supervisors, the integration of external courses in the student's course of study, world-class information-technology platforms offering access to primary and secondary sources under the aegis of the Puritan Research Center and its global affiliated centers, and the commitment to seeing students publish their doctoral dissertation with a first-tier academic publisher.

For its part, the spiritual formation component of the program consist of reading classical sources in Christian spirituality, documented reflection upon that reading, and theoretically-informed practice in experiential preaching and teaching. In continuity with the Reformed and Puritan tradition of international learning, the doctoral program embraces and embodies a vibrant international dimension that fosters and enhances both academic excellence and spiritual depth and breadth.

Key to PRTS's doctoral program is its cutting-edge information technology. This includes digitized primary and secondary sources for research, purpose-built smart classrooms for distance education, and the deployment of digital writing tools for publication. This technology is integral to the doctoral program as it takes the classroom to the non-residential student, providing the most effective learning experience possible. To this end, the doctoral program offers whole courses and specific course components in a variety of formats, including hybrid, blended-learning, in-person and synchronous online formats.

Without compromising its dual focus on academics and spirituality, PRTS sustainably addresses the financial challenges that often accompany a postgraduate degree in a number of ways. Notable examples include the comprehensive use of technology to enrich the delivery of educational content, reduced on-campus residential requirements that alleviate the need for the student to relocate geographically, and the provision of a fully-funded program.

Through its doctoral program, PRTS aims at the formation of pastor-scholars and scholar-pastors. The pastor-scholar is equipped and prepared to serve the church with academic integrity, striving to accurately and effectively communicate the transformative truth of Scripture while addressing the challenges of the modern world. The scholar-pastor is prepared and equipped to serve the academy with pastoral concern while maintaining the highest standards of scholarship. Both the pastor-scholar and scholar-pastor are reflective practitioners, maintaining and deepening the bond between learning and piety in their spirituality, theological reflection, research, relationships, and service.

Program Objectives

In preparing students to serve Christ and His church through biblical, experiential, and practical ministry, the doctoral program of PRTS prepares students to serve the academy and church through:

- **P**iet~~y~~, **P**reaching, and **P**ublications: Throughout the program, students are challenged to grow in their spirituality and to pursue the integration of academics and spiritual life. Students called to a preaching ministry participate in a homiletics practicum to foster biblical and experiential preaching, and all students are encouraged to engage in writing ministry during and upon completion of their studies. This writing ministry unfolds in three ways: publications in scholarly peer-reviewed journals, publications for the edification of the church, and publications designed to reach the unsaved in a skeptical world. Additionally, the dissertation phase of doctoral study culminates in a dissertation that contributes to the church and the academy.
- **R**esearch and **R**eformed: Students develop advanced competency in theology— Reformed theology in particular—and mastery of relevant primary and secondary sources in Biblical Studies, Historical Theology, or Systematic Theology. Regardless of their specialization, students will gain a comprehensive knowledge of Reformed intellectual trajectories and traditions.
- **T**echnology and **T**eaching: Students develop significant skill in the use of digital resources, deployment of digital writing tools, and a God-honoring use of technology, internet, and social media for the dissemination of biblical, experiential, and practical content. Students called to a teaching ministry also

participate in a teaching practicum that hones and integrates these and other abilities while affording them practical experience in academic pedagogy.

- **Scholarship** (academics) and **Scholarships** (financial): Students are able to engage in international scholarly conversations in ways that demonstrates independent inquiry, primary-source research, critical thinking, careful listening and analysis, and the clear, constructive articulation of their research and findings. The fully-funded program makes possible the sustained concentration and singleness of purpose that are essential to this robust scholarly output.

Program Goal

The overarching goal of the doctoral program is the academic and spiritual formation of each doctoral student so as to enable him or her to serve the academy and the church with integrity, academic excellence, and biblical piety. This goal is pursued within three interrelated foci: academic and spiritual formation; formation in research; and formation in ministry.

Assessment of Program Goals

Program Goal (Outcome) 1: Academic and Spiritual Formation

Assessment of this program goal is achieved by the following means:

- Assessment of coursework, evaluation of teaching and/or preaching practicum
- Comprehensive examination assessing depth, breadth, and integration of knowledge
- Review by faculty members and supervisor of the student's academic work and spiritual well-being
- A capstone project on spiritual formation

In assisting students to achieve this goal, PRTS and the Doctoral Program are committed to

- Providing research, educational, and administrative resources,
- Providing resources and oversight for spiritual formation,
- Regularly assessing the teaching effectiveness of resident and adjunct faculty, and
- Regular review of the doctoral curriculum and individual course offerings by the Director of the doctoral program and through internal (faculty and students) and external audits.

Program Goal (Outcome) 2: Formation in Research

Assessment of this program goal is achieved by the following means:

- Coursework assessment: depth, breadth, and integration of knowledge
- The Research Methodology and Dissertation Proposal courses
- The integration of information technology resources in research, writing, and pedagogy
- International dissemination of scholarly work through participation in academic conferences, public lectures, and the publication of peer-reviewed articles
- Preparation, examination, and defense of the doctoral dissertation
- Timely publication of the dissertation and/or peer-reviewed articles derived from it by recognized academic publishers

In assisting students to achieve this goal, PRTS and the Doctoral Program are committed to:

- Offering early introduction to advanced research methodologies,
- Facilitating participation in research projects and conferences tied to the Seminary,
- Offering regular opportunities to present research and to receive critical feedback,
- Ensuring regular dialogue between the student, his supervisor, and the program director,
- Providing financial support for participation in academic conferences and for travel related to dissertation research, and
- Assisting the student in applying for and obtaining research and travel grants.

Program Goal (Outcome) 3: Formation in Ministry

Assessment of this program goal is achieved by the following means:

- The Teaching or Preaching Practicum course and measurement of effectiveness
- Development of communication skills through seminar presentations and dialogue
- Practical experience in effective communication of academic knowledge and research to a scholarly audience
- Practical experience in effective communication of academic knowledge and research to a popular audience

In helping students achieve this goal, PRTS and the Doctoral Program are committed to:

- Facilitating opportunities to teach and/or preach,

- Facilitating participation in Seminary-related speaking engagements, and
- Ensuring regular communication between the student, his supervisor, and the program director.

Admission Requirements

A second graduate degree in theology, such as an accredited Th.M., M.Th., or S.T.M., is *preferred* for admission to the program. Exceptionally gifted students may be accepted into the program having an accredited M.Div. or a first graduate degree in theology, such as an M.A. or M.T.S. Comparable degrees from institutions within or outside North America may be accepted provided that the granting institution(s) can demonstrate that they meet the standards of the ATS Board-approved degrees for admission. Students with a first graduate degree in theology may also apply for the Th.M. (Master of Theology) program and then apply for the Ph.D. program after successful completion of three (3) Th.M. courses with a minimum GPA of 3.50.

To be eligible for admission to the doctoral program, the applicant must:

- Be called to the ministry of teaching and/or preaching,
- Demonstrate strong potential for local and regional influence through a ministry of teaching and/or preaching upon completion of the program,
- Preferably possess a second Master's degree in theology from an accredited institution of higher learning, or in exceptional cases, a first Master's degree in theology from an accredited institute of higher learning,
- Have completed (applicants to the Biblical Studies emphasis *only*) at least six (6) credits of Biblical Hebrew and at least six (6) credits of Biblical Greek. A proficiency test for these biblical languages is part of the admission process for doctoral students in the Biblical Studies emphasis, and consists of translating a minimum of 500 words in two (2) hours with a minimum of eighty (80) percent accuracy. For additional language requirements during the doctoral program, see the section "Research Language Requirements and Exams" below.
- Have teaching and/or preaching experience,
- Adhere to the Three Forms of Unity and/or Westminster Standards (apart from a position on paedobaptism), and
- Demonstrate biblical piety and character.

It is recommended that applications for admission to the doctoral program be submitted no later than **April 30** for a fall-semester matriculation or **October 30** for a spring-semester matriculation. The applicant will be informed of the decision of the Admissions Committee by the Director of Admissions shortly after the meeting at which his or her application is considered. The Admissions Committee meets on a rolling basis approximately every month. Applications must be completed online, and will be considered *only* when all application components have been received or completed. These components include:

- an interview with the President, Program Director, or Director of Admissions,
- submission of official and certified transcripts for all post-secondary education, demonstrating the possession of an undergraduate degree and at least a first Master's degree in theology with a Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.50 or higher (or its equivalent),
- submission of the results of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) with a score of 158 or higher in the Verbal section, and of 5.0 or higher in the Analytical Writing component,
- submission of a recent CV (*curriculum vitae*),
- submission of a copy of a completed Master's degree thesis or major research paper,
- submission of a preliminary dissertation proposal (see Appendix A), and
- submission of two academic references and one ecclesiastical reference.

Tuition and Fees

Non-refundable application for admission	\$ 30
Late registration fee per course	\$ 50
Technology fee (once per semester)	\$ 100
Graduation fee	\$ 250

The doctoral program is fully-funded. All doctoral-level classes and projects offered and overseen by PRTS are fully covered upon admission to the program. *The two required external doctoral courses, however, are at the expense of the student.* Any PRTS courses taken for credit or audit that are not doctoral-level classes will be assessed the regular tuition rate.

Doctoral Student Agreement

Applicants admitted to the doctoral program are required to sign a Doctoral Studies Agreement (see Appendix I).

Program Resources

- Since its inception, the William Perkins Library at PRTS has supported the doctoral program. The library specializes in Puritan and Reformed primary and secondary resources. The Library's holdings are complemented by those of Cornerstone University and Kuyper College, which are jointly shared.
- The Puritan Research Center (PRC), which houses one of the world's most extensive collection of Puritan resources, is the culmination of a dream that is decades old and offers exciting possibilities for promoting the appreciation of Reformed and Puritan literature around the world. The PRC aims to assemble the largest possible collection of (especially digital) resources on the Puritans, including antiquarian books (mostly from the seventeenth century) and modern reprints of Puritan writings, as well as secondary source materials on the Puritans. The PRC also hosts a Torah scroll, an unvocalized Ashkenazi text from a synagogue in Romania dating to the late 19th century and measuring over 125 feet long.
- The Puritan Studies Database permits focused exploration of the holdings of the PRC.
- The William Perkins Library offers access to a wide variety of digital databases. Students are encouraged to contact the library staff regarding these and other resources.
- For on-campus doctoral students, a research carrel will be assigned for each academic year. Visiting doctoral students may notify the library four weeks in advance to reserve a research carrel.
- All doctoral students can access all library privileges with their user login. All library resources are catalogued and accessible at <https://prts.edu/library/>. These include digital and non-digital resources such as books, e-books, primary and secondary sources in commercial and Open Access databases, journals, and e-journals. PRTS is committed the ongoing, aggressive acquisition of digital resources.
- The library IT infrastructure provides online chat and call functionality to make inquiries to the library staff. Upon request, and if necessary, the library staff will prepare digital scans of book pages and articles in accordance with Creative Common License regulations and upload these into the library system, making them available to registered users or emailing the requested material to the student.
- Each student will be assigned a doctoral advisor in the first year of study. The advisor actively oversees the student's progress through the program and his spiritual formation through regular meetings.
- The Doctoral Program strongly encourages students to participate in professional academic societies, which offer opportunities for networking, fellowship, and academic presentations. It therefore offers financial support for students who participate in or present papers at academic conferences. Qualifying expenses include conference registration and travel, lodging, and meals tied conference participation.

Students intending to request reimbursement should review their planned participation with the Director of the doctoral program before finalizing their plans.

- The Program also offers financial support for doctoral students who have passed their comprehensive exams and travel for the purposes of dissertation research (visiting archives, etc.). Students intending to request reimbursement must obtain their faculty advisor's written approval of a clearly defined plan and forward that to the Director of the doctoral program for approval.

Community of Learners

The Doctoral Program puts a premium on the integration of the student in the doctoral learning community. In addition to interaction with peers and doctoral faculty in classroom and seminar settings, the program offers a variety of activities in which students and faculty can interact in other settings, whether in-person or online. These include fellowship meals, research colloquia, prayer meetings, graduate training seminars, and panel discussions. In addition to helping students avoid the danger of isolation that often attends doctoral studies, these activities promote interdisciplinarity, bring the student into contact with the rich cultural and theological breadth of the doctoral community, solidify friendships, foster fruitful cooperation, and nurture holistic, balanced personal development. In addition to regular meetings with his or her advisor, the student also meets several times per year with the Director to ensure his or her smooth, timely progress through the program. So that the student benefits fully from these opportunities, he or she is required to be on campus for one week during the month of August for the first three years of studies, or until the student has completed the comprehensive examination.

Affiliated Institutions for Research and Education

Research conducted in the doctoral program is supported by affiliated research institutions holding specific collections for research in Biblical Studies, Historical Theology, and Systematic Theology. Affiliated educational institutions offer courses open to PRTS doctoral students, who must take two courses with these or other approved external institutions.

Affiliated Research Institutions

Affiliated Research Institutions include, but are not limited to:

- Congregational Library and Archives, Boston—for studies in New England Puritanism
- Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University—for studies in New England Puritanism

- H. Henry Meeter Center at Calvin College—for Reformation studies
- Andrew Fuller Center, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary—for studies in confessional Baptist history
- Johannes à Lasco Library, Emden (Germany)—for Reformation studies
- Institut für schweizerische Reformationsgeschichte der Universität Zürich (Switzerland)—for Reformation studies
- Home for Bible Translators and Scholars (Israel)—for language studies
- Tyndale House, Cambridge (UK)—for Biblical Studies (upon request for Historical Theology)

Affiliated Institutions at Which External Courses May Be Taken

Affiliated institutions include, but are not limited to:

- **Asia:** Hapdong Theological Seminary, South Korea; China Reformed Theological Seminary, Taiwan
- **Europe:** Evangelical Theological Faculty, Leuven, Belgium; Pastors' Academy, London, UK; Theological University Apeldoorn, the Netherlands; Free University Amsterdam, the Netherlands
- **Middle East:** Home for Bible Translators and Scholars, Jerusalem, Israel
- **North America:** Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, MI; Greystone Theological Institute, Coraopolis, PA; the Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University; the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY; Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, PA
- **South America:** Andrew Jumper Graduate School at Mackenzie University, São Paulo (Brazil); Martin Bucer Seminary Brazil, São José dos Campos

Program Planning

In order to facilitate your timely progress through the program, Appendix D (“Suggested Outline for Completing the Doctoral Program in Six Years”) presents program sequencing, residency, and other requirements. These structures formalize the pace and requirements necessary for completion of the program within a six-year period. The Director of the Doctoral Program and/or Doctoral Advisor will establish with each doctoral student a schedule of study that includes the courses taken on- and off-campus as well as those courses taken with an approved partner institution. Several times per year, the Director of the Doctoral Program reviews with the doctoral student his or her schedule of study, assesses the student’s progress, and recommends adjustments to the plan of study if necessary.

This program planning also incorporates assessment of the student’s critical thinking, analytical, and research skills needed for the doctoral dissertation. Regular assessment fosters the organic interrelation of

coursework, research, and the writing of the doctoral dissertation. The overall program planning goals serve to strengthen the student's academic and spiritual formation, and are intended to enable the student to demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of their respective field of study; to practice critical thinking and related intellectual virtues; to pursue diligent academic inquiry with integrity and creativity, leading to original contributions to scholarship; to develop contextual awareness in various settings so as to be relevant and to communicate effectively; and, in so doing, to have a positive missional impact. Students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the *Best Practice Guidelines for Doctoral Programs* as set out by the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education.¹

Course Requirements and Residency Requirement

Courses focus on the field of Historical Theology (Reformation, Post-reformation), Systematic Theology, and Biblical Studies, and incorporate the interests and research of Faculty and Adjunct Faculty of the doctoral program. Students are required to be in residence for one-half of their coursework; other required coursework, research, and dissertation writing may be completed off campus. Thus, given that each of the Ph.D. emphases requires twelve (12) courses, at least six (6) courses must be taken on campus. This does not mean, however, that the doctoral student must relocate to Grand Rapids for these classes. Rather, the majority of doctoral courses are offered in modular or intensive formats (i.e., week-long), allowing the student to fulfill the residency requirement while traveling to and from Grand Rapids.

Of the six (6) courses to be completed on campus, the following two courses, applicable to all three emphases, are *only offered as on-campus courses*:

- The respective Research Methodology course for each emphasis (BS 900, CH900, or ST900) – 3 credits
- BS/CH/ST902 Introduction to Reformed Spirituality and Piety – 3 credits (combined course required for all emphases)

For students in the Historical Theology emphasis, CH901 Introduction to Reformation and Post-Reformation Studies – 3 credits must also be taken on-campus. The remaining required on-campus courses (3 or 4, depending on emphasis) should be selected in consultation with the Registrar and the student's advisor. The above-mentioned on-campus courses (Research Methodology, Introduction to Reformed Spirituality and Piety, and Introduction to Reformation and Post-Reformation Studies) are **only offered during the month of August** on an annual basis.

¹ The aims are established in accordance with the Beirut Benchmarks for professional doctorates. See Ian J. Shaw, ed., *Best Practice Guidelines for Doctoral Programs* (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Langham Partnership, 2015).

Courses that may be taken off-campus

Since a minimum of six (6) courses are to be taken on-campus, up to six (6) other courses can be taken through a combination of the following:

- at least two (2) Ph.D.-level courses related to the student's concentration must be taken from an external institution of higher education (costs to be covered by the student)
- the teaching/preaching practicum (BS/CH/ST992) is conducted as an off-campus course (see "Teaching/Preaching Requirements," below)
- the dissertation proposal course (BS/CH/ST991) is conducted as an off-campus course
- a maximum of two (2) Directed Research and/or Independent Study courses
- live-streamed PRTS doctoral courses, which vary by semester

PhD in Biblical Studies

The Biblical Studies doctoral program offers focused areas of research including but not limited to:

- Old Testament studies
- New Testament studies
- Biblical Theology

PhD students in the Biblical Studies concentration must take the following courses:

- BS900 Research Methodology – 3 credits
- BS/CH/ST902 Introduction to Reformed Spirituality and Piety – 3 credits
- BS941 Introduction to the Septuagint – 3 credits (required for NT emphasis only)
- BS942 Biblical Aramaic – 3 credits (required for OT emphasis only)
- BS991 Dissertation Proposal – 3 credits
- BS992 Teaching/Preaching Practicum – 3 credits

Students must take an additional seven courses for credit, of which at least four must be from the area of concentration (designated by the prefix BS), one from another doctoral concentration (Historical or Systematic Theology), and two related to the student's concentration from an approved external institution of higher education. In addition to courses listed in the published course schedule, students may, upon approval, enroll in BS999 – Directed Research, with the course content and syllabus arranged by the student in consultation with his or her advisor.

PhD in Historical Theology

The Historical Theology doctoral program offers focused areas of research, including but not limited to:

- Historical Figures and Thought
- Documents, Doctrines, and Eras
- Exegesis, Practice, and Preaching

PhD students in the Historical Theology (Reformation, Post-Reformation) concentration must take the following courses:

- CH900 Research Methodology – 3 credits
- CH901 Introduction to Reformation and Post-Reformation Studies – 3 credits
- BS/CH/ST902 Introduction to Reformed Spirituality and Piety – 3 credits
- CH991 Dissertation Proposal – 3 credits
- CH992 Teaching/Preaching Practicum – 3 credits

Students must take an additional seven courses for credit of which at least four courses must be from the area of concentration (designated by the prefix CH), one course from another doctoral concentration (Biblical Studies or Systematic Theology), and two courses related to the student's concentration from an approved external institution of higher education. Aside from these listed courses, students may upon approval enroll in CH999 – Directed Research, with the course content and syllabus arranged by the student in consultation with his or her advisor.

PhD in Systematic Theology

PhD students in the Systematic Theology concentration must take the following courses:

- ST900 Research Methodology – 3 credits
- BS/CH/ST902 Introduction to Reformed Spirituality and Piety – 3 credits
- ST991 Dissertation Proposal – 3 credits
- ST992 Teaching/Preaching Practicum – 3 credits

Students must take an additional eight courses for credit of which at least four courses must be from the area of concentration (designated by the prefix ST), one course from another doctoral concentration (Biblical Studies or Historical Theology), and two courses related to the student's concentration from an approved external higher-education institution. Courses that treat each of the seven systematic loci are offered on a regular three-year cycle. Aside from these listed courses, students may upon approval enroll

in ST999 – Directed Research, with the course content and syllabus arranged by the student in consultation with his or her advisor.

PhD in Homiletics

The doctoral program in Homiletics provides an interdisciplinary, integrative foundation for research, teaching, and practice in homiletics focused on preparation for preaching and the delivery of the sermon.

These two foci encompass the following areas:

- History and Theology of Homiletics
- Cultural Apologetics
- Rhetoric and Communication
- Experiential Preaching
- Spiritual Formation
- The Practice of Homiletics

PhD students in the Homiletics concentration must take the following courses:

- CH900 Research Methodology – 3 credits
- HOM901 Introduction to Homiletical Studies: Historical and Theoretical Survey and Synthesis – 3 credits
- HOM903 – Experiential Preaching: Historical Considerations – 3 credits
- HOM958 Rhetoric and Homiletics – 3 credits
- HOM991 Dissertation Proposal – 3 credits
- HOM992 Preaching Practicum (Preaching labs; Preaching in a Digital Age) – 3 credits

Students must take an additional six courses for credit, of which at least three must be in Homiletics (designated by the prefix HOM), one from another doctoral concentration (Biblical Studies, Historical Theology, or Systematic Theology), and two related to the student's research focus from an approved external institution of higher education. In some cases, students may, with the approval of their advisor, enroll in HOM999 Directed Research, with the course content and syllabus being arranged in consultation with their advisor.

Teaching and Preaching Requirements

The syllabus for BS/CH/ST/HOM992 Teaching/Preaching Practicum outlines the required readings and field education (practical) requirement of 20 hours of teaching or preaching. If they wish, students may combine

teaching and preaching in any proportion that totals 20 hours (e.g., 15 hours teaching + 5 hours preaching). Female doctoral students will fulfill this requirement in its entirety through teaching.

Teaching

Students are required to teach an adult Bible class, catechism class, or course at the diploma, B.A., B.Th., M.A., or M.Div. level that is related to their area of specialization. The student must submit to the advisor and registrar a syllabus and relevant course information four weeks prior to the first teaching occasion. The student must also submit to the advisor, director of the doctoral program, and registrar complete audio or video recordings of two class sessions within four weeks of their being taught.

Preaching

Students are required to preach and lead worship services. The student must inform the advisor in advance of the relevant information concerning the preaching occasion. The student must also submit to the advisor, director of the doctoral program, and registrar full outlines and complete audio or video recordings of two sermons within four weeks of their being preached.

Examinations and Progress in the Program

Coursework

In August of every academic year, students must submit an annual plan of study to their supervisor. Students must successfully complete four (4) courses per 12-month period and maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.50 to continue in the doctoral program.

Research Language Requirements and Exams

During their course of studies and dissertation research, students are required to use competently the language(s) in which relevant primary texts are written, as well as those in which there is important secondary material.

- A. *Requirements:* All doctoral students must demonstrate proficiency in two (2) research languages, such as Latin, German, French, Spanish, Portuguese, or Dutch. The research languages shall be determined by the advisor in consultation with the student. Doctoral students in Historical Theology who have passed a Paleography course may satisfy one (1) research language requirement with a successful proficiency test in paleography.

- B. *Acquisition vis-à-vis progress in the program:* The first proficiency test must be passed *before or when* the student has completed two courses after matriculation (6 credit hours). The second proficiency test must be passed *before or when* the student has completed five courses after matriculation (15 credit hours).
- C. *Acquisition:* Doctoral students may acquire proficiency in the required languages through self-study or by following courses at PRTS (Latin I, Latin II), at institutions such as Calvin College or The Davenant Institute (for Latin), or at similar institutions. A proficiency test is required irrespective of how the language is acquired.
- D. *Proficiency test:* The proficiency test for a research language requires the translation of at least 500 words in two (2) hours with a minimum of 80% percent accuracy. The paleography proficiency test consists of the transcription and editing of a 500-word manuscript text in two (2) hours with a minimum of 80% percent accuracy. Students are to schedule their proficiency tests with the Registrar and in consultation with their advisor.
- E. *Competent use:* Upon passing of the proficiency tests, doctoral students are required to use the research languages in their research papers and doctoral dissertation. The student's supervisor will periodically review submitted work to assess the appropriate use of research languages.

Comprehensive Examination

For the comprehensive examination guidelines, see Appendices F (Biblical Studies) and G (Historical and Systematic Theology).

Time Limits for Degree Completion (Statute of Limitations)

The student must complete all Ph.D. program requirements, including research languages, coursework, and the dissertation, within six (6) years of matriculation. Progress through the program is evaluated in two stages, the first consisting of coursework, proposal, and comprehensive exams (three years), the second consisting of the writing, completion, and successful defense of the dissertation (three years).

- **Stage 1:** To ensure that the student makes steady progress through the program, he or she shall complete all coursework (including external courses, research languages, and the dissertation proposal) and shall pass his or her comprehensive exams within three (3) years (i.e. 36 months) of matriculation. The student may not exceed this three-year limit by more than six (6) months, and any extension beyond the three-year limit must be approved by the dissertation supervisor and the director of the doctoral program; if granted, the student shall pay a continuation fee of \$1,000 for

this extension. If after these six additional months (that is, a total of 3.5 years in the program) the student still has not completed the above-mentioned steps, he or she will be dismissed from the program and granted a Th.M. degree.

- **Stage 2:** Once the student completes the first stage of the program, he or she shall complete the writing and defense of the dissertation within three (3) years of passing the comprehensive exams. The student may not exceed this three-year limit by more than six (6) months, and any extension beyond the three-year limit must be approved by the dissertation supervisor and the director of the doctoral program; if granted, the student shall pay a continuation fee of \$1,000 for this extension. If after these six additional months (that is, a total of 6.5 years [no extension in stage 1] or 7 years [six month extension in stage 1] in the program) the student still has not completed and defended the dissertation, he or she will be dismissed from the program and granted a Th.M. degree.

Exceptions to this policy will be granted only in most extraordinary circumstances, and must be requested in writing of the supervisor (first reader) and Academic Dean. Any exception must be approved by the supervisor and Academic Dean, and shall not exceed one (1) year.

Degree Candidacy and Dissertation Proposal

Students who meet the following requirements are admitted to degree candidacy:

- Completion of the spiritual formation Capstone Project (see Appendix H)
- Completion of coursework with a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.50
- Completion of research language requirements
- Completion of the written and oral components of the comprehensive examination
- Completion of at least 50% of the teaching/preaching requirement
- Submission of a final dissertation proposal:
 - a. Students are to complete their final dissertation proposal upon the successful completion of the Dissertation Proposal course but prior to taking the comprehensive examinations.
 - b. The final dissertation proposal must be approved by the supervisor, co-supervisor, and one PRTS faculty member with expertise in the discipline (two, if the project is interdisciplinary).
 - c. The final dissertation proposal shall be presented in the format set forth in Appendix B (for Biblical Studies) or Appendix C (for Historical and Systematic Theology)

Dissertation Requirements

The doctoral dissertation is the culminating element of the student's formation and development. It is to be undertaken in accord with the following guidelines:

- The student's final dissertation proposal must have been approved by the supervisor, co-supervisor, and one or two additional faculty members (see above) and revised, if necessary, per any guidance received as part of the oral comprehensive exam.
- The dissertation must constitute an original research contribution that serves the academy and the church. The work shall be roughly 80,000–100,000 words in length.
- In view of its nature as original research, the dissertation may have only limited dependence on prior doctoral coursework (such as course papers), at the discretion of the advisor.
- The dissertation shall be prepared in accord with the Library's "Doctoral Dissertation Submission Requirements." It is strongly recommended that the dissertation be edited by a professional editor prior to being submitted.
- The dissertation, including front and back matter, must first be approved by the supervisor, co-supervisor, and one additional faculty member (two if interdisciplinary), on or about **January 31** for a graduation in May of the same year. *Minor deviations* from this and the following dates (except March 10) are possible, but major deviations will jeopardize same-year graduation. The supervisor shall ensure that the entire dissertation conforms to the Seminary's Doctoral Dissertation Submission Requirements, including style and form as well as footnotes and bibliography. Any shortcomings in these areas must be remedied by the student before the first reader approves the dissertation.
- The supervisor must secure the Library Director's approval of the dissertation's style and form before sending it to the internal and external readers.
- The supervisor shall send the completed and approved dissertation to the internal and external readers, with the request that their evaluations be sent to the supervisor on or about **February 28**. Appendix I of this Handbook serves as the template for these evaluations, which should include substantial written comments that justify the various elements of the evaluation. The supervisor shall distribute these evaluations to the Academic Dean, the Director of the doctoral program, and the Registrar within **one week of receipt** and, in any case, at least **six weeks prior to graduation**.
- If the dissertation is passed (by a three-fourths majority of the internal and external examiners), any requested or required revisions proposed by the examiners shall be completed to the satisfaction of the supervisor on or about **March 31**. If the student wishes to have a bound copy available at the public defense, revisions must be completed by **March 10**.

- When satisfied with the revisions, the supervisor shall inform the co-supervisor, Dean, Registrar, and Library Director accordingly. With the authorization of the Academic Dean, a public defense will be scheduled, during which the faculty will vote to pass, reject, or require revision of the dissertation.
- The student shall transmit the final, passed dissertation to the Library Director, who will ensure that style, form, footnotes, and bibliography are satisfactory and then send the dissertation for binding.
- The dissertation shall be submitted to the Registrar in electronic format (both Word and PDF) along with two bound print copies, who will distribute copies to the supervisor, co-advisor, and examiners.

Dissertation Defense

The public defense of the student's dissertation concludes the dissertation stage of the program. The chair will open the defense, then invite the student to summarize the conclusions and contributions of the study, after which the examiners will ask questions of the candidate. After the period of questioning, the chair and examiners will leave the room to deliberate and render an assessment of the defense, which is then announced publicly. After the dissertation supervisor offers an *oratio laudatio*, the ceremony is closed with prayer. Appendix L of this Handbook presents a full description of this ceremony.

Graduation Requirements

Commencement and Academic Regalia

A student will be allowed to graduate only after satisfying all program requirements and having submitted a graduation application to the registrar. Each student who is eligible to receive a degree is expected to participate in the commencement ceremony, unless he or she has compelling reasons for being absent. In such cases, a student will receive the degree *in absentia*. The date for commencement exercises will typically be the first Friday evening after the last final exam of the spring semester. Seminary regalia will be made available for graduating students; graduating students may purchase their academic gowns (this cost is in addition to the graduation fee of \$250).

Dissertation Publication

Students shall make every effort to publish their dissertation with an internationally recognized academic publisher within two years of its completion. The supervisor will assist the student in choosing a suitable publisher and in preparing and proposing the manuscript for publication. Alternatively, the student shall publish at least three articles derived from the dissertation in internationally recognized, peer-reviewed specialized journals. The supervisor will assist the student in choosing suitable journals and in preparing the

articles for submission. Alternately, in some cases it may be suitable, per the guidance of the student's supervisor, to publish the dissertation in other venues to maximize its usefulness to the church at large. This dissemination of the dissertation may or may not be undertaken in parallel with its publication, in part or in whole, by an academic publisher.

APPENDIX A

PRELIMINARY DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

- I. Name of applicant
- II. The provisional title and subtitle of the dissertation
- III. Abstract, consisting of a brief statement of the research question, the scholarly discussion to which it will contribute, and the method(s) it will use to do so (1 page)
- IV. *Status quaestionis* (the current state of scholarly opinion relevant to the main research question (approximately 2 pages)
- V. The significance of the research project for the chosen (sub)discipline and for theology in general (approximately 2 pages)
- VI. Research methodology (approximately 1-2 pages)
- VII. Tentative outline of the dissertation, including a provisional table of contents (not more than 150 words) and a brief description of the content of the planned chapters (not more than 300 words)
- VIII. Bibliography of approximately 50 entries, including primary sources (Historical Theology only)

APPENDIX B

FINAL DISSERTATION PROPOSAL – Biblical Studies

TITLE:

AUTHOR'S NAME:

DATE:

ABSTRACT / PROJECT SUMMARY (1 page – 5%)

Summary of the research problem/question, the primary argument or thesis, and the proposed contribution of the dissertation to current academic discussions.

REQUIRED SECTIONS, LENGTH, AND FORMAT

The proposal shall conform to SBL style, shall be not fewer than 15 and not more than 25 pages in length, and shall include the following sections in approximately the following proportions:

- statement and justification of the research problem and anticipated significance of findings (~10 pages = 45%),
- description and justification of the methods to be used (~4 pages = 20%),
- outline of dissertation (chapters and 2 levels of subheadings; ~2 *single-spaced* pages = 10%),
- bibliography (3-4 *single-spaced* pages = 15%)

PLANNING (1 page – 5%)

Provide a tentative plan and timetable that outline and propose tentative dates for the research, writing, completion of individual chapters, and completion and revision of the dissertation.

FORMAT OF THE FINAL DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

Font and spacing: Times Roman 12-point, double-spaced.

Style: SBL (*The SBL Handbook of Style*, 2nd edition)

APPENDIX C

FINAL DISSERTATION PROPOSAL – Historical / Systematic Theology

TITLE:

AUTHOR'S NAME:

DATE:

ABSTRACT (1/2 page)

Summary of the research problem/question, the primary argument or thesis, and the proposed contribution of the dissertation to current academic and theological discussions.

STATUS QUAESTIONIS AND SIGNIFICANCE (2 pages)

Provide an overview of the arguments found in secondary literature, and show how they differ from your reading of the primary sources. Identify what gaps in scholarly literature the dissertation will fill and the anticipated contribution(s) it will make.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY (1 page)

Describe the research methodology that will be used in the dissertation research and identify pros and cons, if any, of the chosen method.

SOURCES (5 pages)

Provide a description of the primary and secondary sources that are most relevant to the dissertation.

TENTATIVE OUTLINE OF PROPOSED DISSERTATION (3 pages)

Provide an overview of chapters together with a brief summary of how each chapter contributes to the dissertation and to the primary argument or thesis. Show the development of the argument as it moves from the introduction to the conclusion.

PLANNING (1 page)

Provide a tentative plan and timetable that outline and propose tentative dates for the research, writing, completion of individual chapters, and completion and revision of the dissertation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY (max. 10 pages)

FORMAT OF THE FINAL DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

Font and spacing: Times Roman 12-point, double-spaced.

Style: Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (most recent edition).

APPENDIX D

SUGGESTED OUTLINE FOR COMPLETING THE PROGRAM IN SIX YEARS

Year 1

- 3 Credits - Introduction to Reformed Spirituality and Piety*
- 3 Credits - Research Methodology*
- 3 Credits - Introduction to Reformation and Post-Ref. Studies (if in the Historical Theology emphasis)*; another course if not
- First and second research languages *, **, or ***
- 9 Credits - Courses 4, 5, and 6* or **

Year 2

- 12 Credits - Courses 7 – 10* or **
- 3 Credits - Dissertation proposal course** - only offered as distance course
- 3 Credits - Teaching and Preaching course** - only offered as distance course

Year 3

- Spiritual Formation Capstone Project**
- Comprehensive examination*
- Initial dissertation research/work**

Year 4

- Dissertation research/work**
- Dissertation research/work**

Years 5 - 6

- Dissertation completion**
- Dissertation Defense & Graduation*

- * Residential: In-class on-campus
- ** Non-residential (distance education): Live-streamed, online, or directed study
- *** Non-residential: Taken via another institution (an approved course partner of PRTS)

APPENDIX E

CHECKLIST FOR DOCTORAL STUDENTS

- ☐ Completed **10 PhD-level courses** from PRTS including:
 - ☐ Teaching / Preaching Practicum course
 - ☐ Dissertation Proposal course
- ☐ Completed **2 external doctoral-level courses** and sent the transcripts with final grades of these courses to the registrar
- ☐ Passed **2 research language proficiency exams**
- ☐ With the supervisor, scheduled the date of **Comprehensive Exam**
 - ☐ For Historical / Systematic Theology, submitted **essay on selected primary source** – one month prior to exam
 - ☐ For Historical / Systematic Theology, completed **reading of secondary source list** – one month prior to exam
 - ☐ Completed reading of **Comprehensive Exam and Dissertation-specific Reading Lists** – one month prior to exam
 - ☐ Submitted **Analytical Bibliographic Essay** – one month prior to exam
 - ☐ Submitted **Final Dissertation Proposal** – one month prior to exam
 - ☐ Submitted **Spiritual Formation Capstone Project** – one month prior to exam
- ☐ Passed all components of the **Comprehensive Exams**
- ☐ Completed an accepted **dissertation**
- ☐ Participated in and sustained the **public defense** of the dissertation
- ☐ Received Ph.D. diploma

CHECKLIST FOR DOCTORAL SUPERVISORS

- ☐ Advised student on appropriate **courses** to take
- ☐ Advised student on appropriate **research languages**
- ☐ Ensured that student is working on the **Dissertation-specific Reading List** and the **Analytical Bibliographic Essay** as well as **Comprehensive Exam reading list**
- ☐ Secured, at least one month before the comprehensive exams, a qualified **co-supervisor** (second reader) to grade the written comprehensive exams, approve the dissertation proposal, and provide feedback on completed dissertation chapters (see immediately below) as well as **four examiners** for the oral component of the Comprehensive Exam. Of these four, at least two shall be members of the seminary's faculty; ideally, the two other members will be external to the seminary.
- ☐ Obtained the approval of the proposal by a qualified faculty member (two if interdisciplinary).
- ☐ **Scheduled** the Comprehensive Exam, and notified the faculty, academic dean, and registrar
- ☐ **Received the following material** for the comprehensive exam and distributed it to the four examiners at least one month prior to the exam date:
 - ☐ Primary source essay (Historical / Systematic Theology only)
 - ☐ Analytical Bibliographic Essay

- ☐ Final dissertation proposal approved by the co-supervisor as well as one PRTS faculty member(two if the proposal is interdisciplinary)
- ☐ Spiritual Formation Capstone Project
- ☐ **Chaired** the Comprehensive Examination
- ☐ **Arranged payment** of external oral comprehensive exam jury member(s)
- ☐ **Informed registrar** of Comprehensive Examination result
- ☐ Worked **chapter by chapter** on the dissertation with the student, and ensured that the co-supervisor's input is obtained and integrated in each chapter, ensuring that the student receives feedback on chapter sections within two (2) weeks and on whole chapters within four (4) weeks
- ☐ Arranged for **two internal and two external examiners** of the completed dissertation and provided examiners with the criteria for examining the dissertation (see Appendix J)
- ☐ Obtained the approval of the dissertation by a qualified faculty member (two if interdisciplinary)
- ☐ **Informed** Director of the Doctoral Program of the names of the four dissertation examiners
- ☐ Within one week of receipt, and at least six weeks before graduation, **submitted the four examination reports** to the Academic Dean, Registrar, and Director of the Doctoral Program
- ☐ **Arranged payment** of external co-supervisor and external examiners of the completed dissertation
- ☐ With the registrar, **scheduled the date of public defense**. The date of the defense may be scheduled during the week of graduation, although this is not required. The public defense is to be in-person and on-campus, unless circumstances prevent this, in which case the defense will take place virtually via Zoom or a similar platform

CHECKLIST FOR CO-SUPERVISORS (SECOND READERS)

- ☐ Provide **thorough feedback** on final drafts of the final dissertation proposal and Analytical Bibliographic Essay that have been approved by the supervisor, within three (3) weeks of receipt
- ☐ Grade the **written components** of the student's comprehensive exam within two (2) weeks of receipt
- ☐ Provide thorough **feedback on completed drafts of each chapter** of the co-supervisor reader is not responsible for overseeing the various stages of writing and feedback that precede the completion of each chapter's draft. Exceptions may be made in cases in which a particular chapter or chapters deal(s) with subject matter for which the co-supervisor is intentionally chosen due to his expertise in that area.

APPENDIX F

GUIDELINES FOR COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS: BIBLICAL STUDIES

The comprehensive evaluation in Biblical Studies is designed to give doctoral students the opportunity to demonstrate that they have the requisite academic skills and knowledge to make a meaningful contribution to the field of Biblical Studies. Successful students advance to the dissertation writing phase of the doctoral program and are considered doctoral candidates in Biblical Studies. This is achieved by passing the battery of exams described below.

Overview

The comprehensive examination for doctoral students in Biblical Studies consists of three written exams and an oral exam covering the second and third written exams, the bibliographic essay, the dissertation proposal, and the student's integration of faith and scholarship.

Part 1: Written Exams

Three written examinations of four hours each test the student's competence in his or her chosen field (usually OT or NT), specifically in unaided translation and exegesis of biblical texts, competence in the area of study, and understanding of the relation of Biblical Studies to the rest of the theological task.²

The Comprehensive Exam reading list for the second and third written examinations is set by the Biblical Studies doctoral faculty and consists of secondary sources related to the student's general field of research (Biblical Studies, with a specialization in one Testament where appropriate; see the "[Old Testament Comprehensive Exam Reading List](#)" and "[New Testament Comprehensive Exam Reading List](#)"). The student should be able to summarize in their broad lines the contents, argument, and conclusions of these secondary sources as well as related trends and issues in the discipline.

It is strongly recommended that the student begin reading the Comprehensive Exam reading list as early as possible after matriculation in order to facilitate sustained reflection on the readings and to promote their integration in his or her coursework. The readings required by the dissertation-specific reading list (see below) should also be begun in advance and be largely completed before the student registers for BS 991 Dissertation Proposal.

Part 2: Analytical Bibliographic Essay

As part of BS991 Dissertation Proposal, the dissertation supervisor and doctoral student will have established the Dissertation-Specific Reading List of up to 5,000 pages that underlies the Analytical Bibliographic Essay (the vast majority of the sources included in the Dissertation-Specific Reading List will

² Students should arrive well before the scheduled time of their examination. Students who arrive late will not be permitted to sit for the examination, and no extensions beyond the four-hour limit for each examination will be granted. Interruptions during the examination are not permitted. No cell phones or personal electronic devices are permitted in the exam room. The Seminary will furnish an electronic tablet and keyboard, personal computer, or equivalent for the composition of the exam. During the exam, no access to any electronic or unauthorized resource is permitted.

A student may take the exams from a distance only if the following conditions are met: 1) a written request is made by the student demonstrating why on-campus exams present a grave hardship, 2) a secure proctoring system is established, and 3) the request is granted by both the student's supervisor and the PhD program director.

presumably be integrated in the dissertation proposal). The Analytical Bibliographic Essay shall be approximately 50 pages in length (including footnotes/endnotes but excluding bibliography, double spaced, 12-point font). The aggregate reading requirements for the written exams and Analytical Bibliographic Essay shall total at least 12,000 pages and not exceed 15,000 pages.

In this essay, the student shall articulate concisely and precisely the main arguments of the *most relevant* secondary literature as they bear upon the following areas: current discussion of the proposed topic and immediately related issues; the specific goals and anticipated contributions of the dissertation; and the methods that will be employed to attain these goals. The essay must evidence careful analysis, attention to each author's methodology, and a clear understanding of each work's relevance to the proposed dissertation. The Essay should conclude with a short evaluative synthesis with respect to the dissertation's anticipated contribution (2 pages).

Part 3: Dissertation Proposal

The Dissertation Proposal, having been completed as part of BS991 Dissertation Proposal, demonstrates that the student has identified a viable topic that will make a meaningful contribution to the field of Biblical Studies. Within the context of the comprehensive exam and on the basis of the proposal, the student is expected to demonstrate the viability of the proposed dissertation by articulating a clear research question, stating a thesis on that question that makes an arguable claim, defining a manageable scope of research, situating the argument of the proposed dissertation within contemporary discussion of the topic, articulating the method(s) to be employed, outlining the overall argument that will guide the study, and identifying the study's anticipated contributions to the academic Biblical Studies and their anticipated benefit to the church.

Part 4: Oral Exam

The oral examination assesses the student's second and third written exams, Analytical Bibliographic Essay, Dissertation Proposal and competencies directly related to it, and ability to articulate, explain, and defend his or her integration of faith and scholarship. The student is examined by a four-person committee consisting of at least two members of the seminary's doctoral faculty and one or two additional examiners. Examiners may be full-time or adjunct members of the PRTS faculty or may be without formal ties to the seminary, but all must have expertise in Biblical Studies or a subject area related to the proposed dissertation topic. The committee examining an interdisciplinary proposal must include at least one examiner with expertise in the second discipline.³ The oral examination lasts approximately two and one-half hours.

Preparation

Written Exams

Exam 1: Translation and exegesis of biblical texts. This portion of the examination tests the student's ability to translate and exegete texts of different genres in the original language(s) without the use of any resources. Selections from the following pericopae will appear in the examination and will not exceed approximately 70 chapters in total: for OT, Genesis 1-12; Judges 6-12; II Kings 17-22; Isaiah 1-12; Psalms

³ The oral examination may be attended *ex officio* by the President, the Academic Dean, the Director of the Doctoral Program, and any member of the Board of Trustees in the role of observer.

90-106; Proverbs 1-9; Daniel 4-6; Ezra 5:1-6:8; for NT, Matthew 3-11; John 13-21; Acts 10-15; Romans 12-15; 1 Corinthians 1-6; Ephesians; Hebrews 1-6; 1 Peter; Revelation 1-7. Selections from both Testaments will be assigned if the student's focus is robustly biblical-theological. The selected texts may also include one or two sections of biblical text of direct relevance to the dissertation. The student is expected to translate accurately and to provide exegetical commentary on the text by dealing as appropriate with important text-critical problems, showing a robust understanding of grammatical and syntactical features, and demonstrating competence in linguistic and semantic matters. No dictionary or other resources are permitted for Part 1 of the written examination. The student will be furnished with an unmarked copy of *Biblica Hebraica Stuttgartensia* and/or a Greek New Testament with critical apparatus.

Exam 2: Old/New Testament Introduction. This portion of the examination tests the student's familiarity with and understanding of the entire field of Old or New Testament Studies (or both if the student's focus is solidly biblical-theological). The examinee will be expected to answer questions of any depth in the following areas. **NB:** no print or electronic resources are allowed for Part 2.

- Critical issues and methods;
- Hebrew and Aramaic linguistics (OT) or Greek linguistics (NT);
- textual criticism, transmission, and canon;
- ancient Near Eastern history and culture (OT) or Greco-Roman history and culture, early Christianity (NT);
- Pentateuch (OT) or Gospels (NT);
- historiography;
- prophecy (OT) or apocalyptic (NT);
- wisdom and poetry (OT) or Paul and general epistles (NT);
- biblical theology and hermeneutics.

Exam 3: Synthesis. The final portion of the examination tests the student's ability to articulate and defend on biblical and other grounds an approach to biblical studies that **(1)** ably incorporates relevant extra-biblical material (archaeology, history, etc.); **(2)** critically, insightfully, and fairly evaluates dominant interpretative methods and approaches, and wisely practices methods well-suited to and consistent with Scripture, with special attention to epistemological, philosophical, and anthropological issues; **(3)** demonstrates a robust understanding of the theory and practice of redemptive-historical biblical theology, especially the issues of diversity and chronological development; and **(4)** explains the importance of the interpreter's relationship with God for his or her theological work and examines the varied ways that this work relates to and serves the church and the academy. **NB:** unmarked, non-study editions of English, Greek, Hebrew, and/or native-language Bibles may be used for Part 3.

Oral Exam

As part of BS991 Dissertation Proposal, the dissertation supervisor and doctoral student will have established the Dissertation-Specific Reading List of up to 5,000 pages that underlies the Analytical Bibliographic Essay (the vast majority of the sources included in the Dissertation-Specific Reading List will presumably be integrated in the dissertation proposal). The Analytical Bibliographic Essay shall be approximately 50 pages in length (including footnotes/endnotes but excluding bibliography, double spaced,

12-point font). The aggregate reading requirements for the written exams and Analytical Bibliographic Essay shall total at least 12,000 pages and not exceed 15,000 pages.

Scheduling

It is the responsibility of the student, in consultation with his or her supervisor, to schedule the comprehensive examination.

- Students shall notify their supervisor of their desire to schedule the comprehensive examination 3–6 months before the anticipated completion of their coursework.
- Students cannot sit for their written or oral exams until all coursework is complete (with the exception of up to one-half of BS992 Practicum).
- The comprehensive exams, including written and oral components, must be completed within three (3) months of completing all coursework.
- The Analytical Bibliographic Essay and an approved Dissertation Proposal must be submitted four (4) weeks prior to sitting for the written exams.⁴
- The biblical texts to be mastered for the first written exam will be communicated to the student not later than the time at which the dates of the comprehensive exam are determined.
- The three written exams and oral exam shall be taken at Puritan Reformed (or from a distance if permitted; see footnote above) within a four-week period. Students shall sit for all three written exams within the first 10 days of this four-week period. Upon passing the written exams, the oral exam shall be undertaken within the final week of this four-week period.
- The dissertation supervisor will announce the date of the oral comprehensive examination to the Registrar and to the seminary faculty, ordinarily at a regular faculty meeting.

Once scheduled, no change in the scheduled date of any component of the comprehensive examination will be permitted apart from extraordinary circumstances as determined by the supervisor, Registrar, Academic Dean, and Director of the Doctoral Program.

Procedures and Methods of Evaluation

Written Exams

The written components shall be evaluated separately by the supervisor and co-advisor. Part 1 will be evaluated for accuracy of translation and adequacy of exegetical notes, and a grade of 75% is required for a Pass. The other two components of the written examination shall be graded Pass/Fail (a percentage grade shall also be attributed). At least four (4) passing grades of the six grades assigned by the two examiners (each examiner assigning one grade for each section) are required for the student to sustain the three written parts of the examination.

In attributing a Pass for any of the three sections, the supervisor may, in consultation with the co-advisor, give specific advice for further work or may add conditions that must be met before a Pass is granted for

⁴ The dissertation proposal, composed in accordance with the syllabus for ST991 Dissertation Proposal, must be approved by the dissertation supervisor and co-supervisor and one PRTS faculty member with the requisite specialization (two if the dissertation is interdisciplinary) at least four (4) weeks before the beginning of the oral comprehensive examination. The supervisor will distribute the proposal to the examiners within one (1) week of receipt.

the examination as a whole. In the case of a Fail, the student may retake the examination (in part or in whole, as appropriate) after further preparation unless the examiners agree that the student should not proceed further in the program. No part of the written component may be attempted more than twice. The supervisor and co-advisor shall communicate their decision to the student, registrar, dean, and director of the doctoral program within two (2) weeks of the supervisor's receipt of the exam.

Oral Exam

Upon successful completion of the written exams, the student proceeds to the oral examination. The oral examination involves further assessment of the student's second and third written exams, Analytical Bibliographic Essay, Dissertation Proposal and competencies directly related to it, and ability to articulate, explain, and defend his or her integration of faith and scholarship. The following competencies and dispositions are particularly important:

- Approaching the material and interaction from the vantage point of faith governing intellect.
- Interacting fairly and fruitfully with other scholars and their output relating to the dissertation.
- Sufficiently grasping the potential, challenge, and value of their dissertation topic and the method(s) they have selected.
- Meaningfully engaging other scholars, even from other disciplines, and interacting with them in ways that lead to fruitful learning on all parts.

The oral comprehensive examination proceeds as follows:

1. The oral comprehensive examination is chaired by the dissertation supervisor, who is not one of the examiners.
2. The oral comprehensive examination is opened and closed with prayer by the dissertation supervisor or designee, and proceeds in rounds as follows:

a. Review of the second and third written exams (35 minutes)

Each examiner is invited to ask the student follow-up questions on his or her second and third written exams (5-7 minutes per examiner). The questions may seek clarification or elaboration, or they may correct or critique weak or flawed answers. The student is then asked to reflect (10 minutes) on what he or she has learned from the written exams concerning the following three areas:

- i. Where fault-lines of scholarship currently lie and how to address them;
- ii. What areas of scholarship to which they need further exposure; and
- iii. Which areas bear most directly on their research.

b. Review of Analytical Bibliographic Essay (40 Minutes)

The student offers an oral summary of the Analytical Bibliographic Essay (15 minutes), after which each examiner is invited to lead a discussion (5-7 minutes per examiner) with the student about the Analytical Bibliographic Essay.

Break (10 minutes)

c. Review of Dissertation Proposal (40 minutes)

The student offers an oral summary of the Dissertation Proposal (15 minutes), after which each examiner is invited to lead a discussion (5-7 minutes per examiner) with the student about the Dissertation Proposal.

d. Faith and Scholarship Presentation (30 minutes)

The student gives a presentation on specific ways in which their faith influences their scholarship (10 minutes), after which each of the four examiners then leads a discussion (5 minutes per examiner) with the student about the intersection of faith and scholarship.

Upon the completion of the oral comprehensive examination the student shall leave the room while the examiners meet in private for at most one hour to discuss the comprehensive examination. The dissertation supervisor will chair the meeting and invite each examiner to offer a brief verbal assessment of the student's performance in the following four areas:

- (i) The written exams;
- (ii) The Analytical Bibliographic Essay;
- (iii) The Dissertation Proposal; and
- (iv) The presentation of the student's integration of faith and scholarship.

Each examiner will then be asked to vote Pass/Fail for each of these four (4) parts of the oral exam. The student sustains the entire comprehensive examination if at least three-fourths of the votes cast are Pass. This requires twelve (12) Pass votes out of a total of sixteen (16) votes cast by a four-examiner committee. In attributing a Pass (i.e. at least 3 "Pass" votes) for any section of the oral exam, a majority (51% or more) of the examiners may advise further work or may add conditions that must be met before a Pass is granted for the examination as a whole.

Once the examiners have concluded their discussion, the doctoral student will be summoned and the supervisor will communicate the result to the student. In the case of a Fail, the student may retake the oral examination (in part or in whole, as appropriate) after further preparation unless the examiners agree that the student should not proceed further in the program. No component of the oral examination may be attempted more than twice.

The dissertation supervisor will inform the Registrar, Academic Dean, and Director of the Doctoral Program of the result of the comprehensive examination within one week of the date of the oral exam.

APPENDIX G

GUIDELINES FOR COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS: HISTORICAL THEOLOGY

The comprehensive examination for doctoral students in Historical Theology consists of a three-part written component and a two-part oral examination.

Overview

Three written examinations test the student's competence in his or her chosen field, specifically in unaided translation and interpretation of a primary source text, competence in the general area of study, and robust understanding of the relation of Historical Theology to the rest of the theological task.

The oral examination is an assessment of the student's mastery of the area of specialization and focuses on the dissertation proposal and competencies directly relating to it. The student is examined by a committee consisting of at least two members of the seminary's doctoral faculty and two other examiners. The oral examination will last two and one-half hours (excluding a 10-minute break).

Preparation

It is the responsibility of the doctoral student to meet with the advisor to discuss, plan for, and schedule the comprehensive examination.

Part 1: Primary source reading and analysis

The student should be able to translate and interpret a variety of primary source text in the original languages. These texts will include selections from across the Early Modern era (ca. 1450 – 1750) and may include the text used for a foreign language proficiency exam, as well as a small number of texts directly relevant to the dissertation selected by the dissertation supervisor. The precise texts to be mastered will be communicated to the student not later than the time at which the date of the comprehensive examination is determined.

Part 2: Secondary source reading list and analysis

The reading list for the oral examination is set by the Historical / Systematic Theology doctoral faculty and consists of secondary sources related to the student's general field of research (see relevant Comprehensive Examination Reading List). The student should be able to summarize in broad lines the contents, argument, and conclusions of these secondary sources.

It is strongly recommended that the student begin reading the required materials other than dissertation-specific reading list as early as possible after matriculation in order to facilitate sustained reflection on the readings and to promote their integration in other coursework. The dissertation-specific reading should also be started in advance, and must be well underway before the student registers for CH 991 Dissertation Proposal.

Part 3: Historiography: Analytical Bibliographic Essay

The dissertation supervisor and doctoral student will establish a dissertation-specific reading list for the bibliographic essay, which list may include the bibliography of the dissertation proposal. The student should be able to articulate concisely and precisely the main argument of all immediately relevant secondary literature. The aggregate reading requirements for the written and oral components of the comprehensive exams will total not less than 10,000 pages and not more than 15,000 pages.

The doctoral student shall compose a descriptive-analytical bibliographic essay of 50 pages (including footnotes/endnotes but excluding bibliography, double space, 12-point font) that covers the secondary sources directly relevant to the dissertation. The essay must evidence careful analysis, attention to each author's methodology, and a clear understanding of each work's relevance to the project, and should conclude with a short evaluative synthesis with an eye to the dissertation's anticipated contribution.

The analytical bibliographical essay shall be submitted to the student's advisor four (4) weeks before the date of the oral comprehensive examination. The advisor will distribute the bibliographical essay to the other examiners within one (1) week of receipt.

Part 4: Dissertation proposal

The dissertation proposal must be approved by the dissertation supervisor, co-advisor, academic dean and director of the doctoral program at least four (4) weeks prior to the date of the comprehensive examination. The advisor will distribute the dissertation proposal to the other examiners within one (1) week of receipt.

Scheduling

- It is the responsibility of the student in consultation with the supervisor to schedule the comprehensive examination. Once scheduled, no change in the scheduled date of any component of the comprehensive examination will be permitted apart from extraordinary circumstances as determined by the supervisor, Registrar, Academic Dean, and Director of the Doctoral Program.
- The dates of all components of the comprehensive examination may be set at least three (3) months but not more than six (6) months in advance, and may be set before the doctoral student has finished his or her course work.
- The comprehensive exam, including written and oral components, is to be taken not later than three months after the completion of all doctoral course work.
- The four exams (three written, followed by one oral) shall be taken at Puritan Reformed ***within a period not exceeding one month***. The three written exams shall be written **within the first 10 days** of this one-month period. Upon passing the written exams, the oral exam shall be undertaken **within the final week** of this one-month period.
- The dissertation supervisor will announce the date of the oral comprehensive examination to the registrar and to the seminary faculty at a regular faculty meeting.

Description, Written Component

Part 1: Translation and interpretation of primary source texts. This portion of the examination tests the student's ability to translate (if applicable) and interpret primary source texts of different genres without the use of any resources. In addition, the advisor may assign to the student one or two other short sections of primary source text of direct relevance to the dissertation. The student is expected to translate accurately and to provide historical and theological commentary on the text by dealing as appropriate with important issues of continuity and discontinuity, historical context, theological trajectories and context, where applicable. The student will be furnished with a copy of the primary source text (s).

Part 3: Historiography: Bibliographic essay. This portion of the examination tests the student's familiarity with and understanding of the entire field of Historical Theology, limited to the Early Modern era (ca. 1450

– 1750), or the entire field of Systematic Theology, including the modern era. The examinee should be able to analyze and articulate the following areas and to situate his project with respect to prominent trends, method, arguments, and conclusions: current discussion of the proposed dissertation topic and immediately related issues; the specific goals and anticipated contributions of the dissertation; and the methods that will be employed to attain these goals.

Part 4: Dissertation proposal. The final portion of the examination tests the student's ability to synthesize, articulate and defend on sufficient scholarly grounds an approach to theological studies that (1) ably incorporates relevant interdisciplinary material (history, politics, philosophy, economy, etc.); (2) critically evaluates dominant interpretative methods and approaches, and wisely practices methods well-suited to and consistent with the field of theology, with special attention especially in historical theology to issues of continuity and discontinuity of intellectual history, and theological trajectories; (3) demonstrates a robust understanding of the theory and practice of interdisciplinary research; and (4) explains the importance of the interpreter's relationship with God for his or her theological work and examines the varied ways that this work relates to and serves the church and the academy.

General guidelines: Students should submit the written components of the Comprehensive Exam (Part 1, Part 3, and Part 4) to the supervisor per an agreed-upon schedule, but no later than one month prior to the scheduled date of the comprehensive examination.

Evaluation, Written Component

The written component shall be evaluated separately by the supervisor and co-advisor. Part 1 will be evaluated for accuracy of translation and adequacy of interpretative notes, and a grade of 75% is required for a Pass. The other two parts of the examination shall be graded Pass/Fail. For Parts 3 and 4, at least 6 passing grades (of the 8 grades assigned by the two examiners for each of the three sections) is required for the student to sustain those parts of the examination. In attributing a Pass for any of the three sections, the supervisor may, in consultation with the co-advisor, give specific advice for further work or may add conditions that must be met before a Pass is granted for the examination as a whole. In the case of a fail, it is assumed that the student will retake the examination (in part or in whole) after further preparation unless the examiners agree that the student should not proceed further in the program. No part of the written component may not be attempted more than twice. The supervisor and co-advisor shall communicate their decision to the student, registrar, dean, and director of the doctoral program within two (2) weeks of the supervisor's receipt of the exam.

Description, Oral Component

Upon successful completion of the written component, the student proceeds to the oral component of the examination. The oral examination is attended by the doctoral student and four examiners, of which two are members of the seminary's doctoral program faculty in the student's area of specialization. The two other examiners may be full-time or adjunct members of the Puritan Reformed faculty, or may be without formal ties to the seminary. The oral examination may be attended *ex officio* by the President, the Academic Dean, and any member of the Board of Trustees in the role of observer. The exam shall proceed thus:

- 1) The oral comprehensive examination is chaired by the dissertation supervisor, who is not one of the four examiners.

- 2) The oral comprehensive examination is opened with prayer by the dissertation supervisor or designee.
- 3) The doctoral student first offers a 15-minute oral summary of Part 2 (**Secondary source reading list and analysis**), followed by a 15-minute oral summary of Part 3 (**Analytical Bibliographic Essay**).
- 4) Each of the examiners then leads a 15-minute discussion with the student about Parts 2 and 3, with the dissertation supervisor doing so last.
- 5) A pause of 10 minutes is given to the examiners and student.
- 6) The student shall then offer a 15-minute oral summary of Part 4 (**Dissertation Proposal**).
- 7) Each of the examiners shall lead a 15-minute discussion with the doctoral student about the dissertation proposal, with the dissertation supervisor doing so last.
- 8) The comprehensive examination is closed with prayer by the advisor or designee.

Evaluation, Oral Component

The oral component shall be evaluated separately by four examiners of which at least two examiners will be from the doctoral faculty. Upon the completion of the Comprehensive Examination:

- 1) The student leaves the room.
- 2) The examiners meet in private for at most one hour to discuss the comprehensive examination. The dissertation supervisor will chair the meeting.
- 3) Each examiner offers an oral assessment of the overall comprehensive examination, and of the individual parts (bibliographic essay and dissertation proposal).
- 4) Each examiner will vote Pass/Fail for each part of the comprehensive examination as described immediately below.
- 5) The student sustains the comprehensive examination by receiving six (6) "Pass" votes out of a total of eight (8) votes, consist of four examiners voting for Parts 2 and 3 *taken together* (i.e. the Secondary source reading list *and* Bibliographic essay *as a single component*) and for Part 4 (dissertation proposal). In attributing a Pass for either of the sections of the oral component, a majority (51% or more) of the examiners may give specific advice for further work, or may add conditions that must be met before a Pass is granted for the examination as a whole.
- 6) Once the examiners have concluded their discussion, the doctoral student will be called back and the advisor will communicate the result of the examiners to the student.
- 7) In the case of a fail, it is assumed that the student will retake the oral examination after further preparation unless the examiners agree that the student should not proceed further in the program. No component of the oral examination may be attempted more than twice.
- 8) The dissertation supervisor will inform the registrar, academic dean, and director of the doctoral program of the result of the comprehensive examination within one week of the date of the oral examination.

APPENDIX H

GUIDELINES FOR COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS: SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

The comprehensive evaluation in Systematic Theology is designed to give doctoral students the opportunity to demonstrate that they have the requisite academic skills and knowledge to make a meaningful contribution to the field of Systematic Theology. Successful students advance to the dissertation writing phase of the doctoral program and are considered doctoral candidates in Systematic Theology. This is achieved by passing the battery of exams described below.

Overview

The comprehensive examination for doctoral students in Systematic Theology consists of four parts: a set of three written exams; a bibliographic essay; a dissertation proposal; and an oral exam covering these components as well as the student's integration of faith and scholarship.

Part 1: Written Exams

Students will complete three written exams designed to test the student's competence in Systematic Theology, including the student's breadth and depth of knowledge in the field and the ability to use that knowledge in the practice of theology in service of the church and academy. Students are expected to be able to competently and accurately articulate Reformed theological positions and relate Reformed positions to other historical and contemporary theological traditions. Each exam must be completed on campus, and each exam is allotted four hours to complete.⁵

- a) Prolegomena Exam: the first exam tests the student's grasp of the breadth and depth of Systematic Theology as an academic discipline within the theological encyclopedia through questions on theological prolegomena including sources, methods, norms, and ends of Systematic Theology.
- b) Doctrinal Exam: the second exam tests the student's grasp of the doctrinal content of Systematic Theology. Students are expected to demonstrate a breadth and depth of doctrinal understanding across all six loci with additional depth in at least one supervisor-approved loci outside of the student's dissertation area.
- c) Interdisciplinary Exam: the third exam tests the student's theological acumen through questions on the relation of Systematic Theology to other branches of theological study, such as Biblical Exegesis, Biblical Theology, Historical Theology, Apologetics, Moral Theology, and Practical Theology, as well as the relationship of faith to theological inquiry. Students should also be familiar with recent developments in Biblical Studies and Historical Theology and able to discuss their relevance to Systematic Theology.

⁵ Students should arrive well before the scheduled time of their examination. Students who arrive late will not be permitted to sit for the exam and no extensions beyond the four-hour limit for each exam will be granted. Interruptions during the exam are not permitted. No cell phones or personal electronic devices are permitted in the exam room. The Seminary will furnish an electronic tablet and keyboard, personal computer, or equivalent for the composition of the written exams. During the exam, no access to any electronic or unauthorized resource is permitted.

A student may take the exams from a distance only if the following conditions are met: 1) a written request is made by the student demonstrating why on-campus exams present a grave hardship, 2) a secure proctoring system is established, and 3) the request is granted by both the student's supervisor and the PhD program director.

The student-specific reading list for these three written exams is negotiated between the dissertation supervisor and the doctoral student. Supervisors and students should work toward a student-specific reading list that reflects the structure and content outlined in the guidelines suggested under “Preparation” below and the document [“Comprehensive Exam Reading Lists for Systematic Theology.”](#) These guidelines are designed to compel the student to read widely and deeply in Systematic Theology while allowing sufficient flexibility to craft the reading list to serve the student’s best interests. It is strongly recommended that the student begin reading the Comprehensive Exam reading list as early as possible after matriculation in order to facilitate sustained reflection on the readings and to promote their integration in his or her coursework.

The student-specific reading list for the written exams in Systematic Theology should include approximately 10,000 pages and may include some works read for prior coursework. A dissertation-specific reading list—the basis for the Analytical Bibliographic Essay described below—should include approximately 5,000 pages and the two lists should not overlap. The aggregate reading requirements for the written exams and Analytical Bibliographic Essay shall total at least 12,000 pages and not exceed 15,000 pages.

Part 2: Analytical Bibliographic Essay

As part of ST991 Dissertation Proposal, the dissertation supervisor and doctoral student will have established the Dissertation-Specific Reading List of up to 5,000 pages that underlies the Analytical Bibliographic Essay (the vast majority of the sources included in the Dissertation-Specific Reading List will presumably be integrated in the dissertation proposal). The Analytical Bibliographic Essay shall be approximately 50 pages in length (including footnotes/endnotes but excluding bibliography, double spaced, 12-point font). The aggregate reading requirements for the written exams and Analytical Bibliographic Essay shall total at least 12,000 pages and not exceed 15,000 pages.

In this essay, the student shall articulate concisely the main arguments of immediately relevant secondary literature as they bear upon the following areas of the dissertation: current discussion of the proposed topic and immediately related issues; the specific goals and anticipated contributions of the dissertation; and the methods that will be employed to attain these goals. The essay must evidence careful analysis of the texts reviewed, attention to each author’s methodology, and a clear understanding of each work’s relevance to the proposed dissertation. The essay should conclude with a short evaluative synthesis with respect to the dissertation’s anticipated contribution to the contemporary discussion (2 pages).

Part 3: Dissertation Proposal

The Dissertation Proposal, having been completed as part of BS 991 Dissertation Proposal, demonstrates that the student has identified a viable topic that will make a meaningful contribution to the field of Biblical Studies. Within the context of the comprehensive exam and on the basis of the proposal, the student is expected to demonstrate the viability of the proposed dissertation by articulating a clear research question, stating a thesis on that question that makes an arguable claim, defining a manageable scope of research, situating the argument of the proposed dissertation within contemporary discussion of the topic, articulating the method(s) to be employed, outlining the overall argument that will guide the study, and identifying the study’s anticipated contributions to the academic Biblical Studies and their anticipated benefit to the church.

Part 4: Oral Exam

The oral examination assesses the student's written exams, Analytical Bibliographic Essay, Dissertation Proposal and competencies directly related to it, and ability to articulate, explain, and defend his or her integration of faith and scholarship. The student is examined by a committee consisting of at least two members of the seminary's faculty and one or two external examiners, for a total of four examiners. Examiners may be full-time or adjunct members of the PRTS faculty or may otherwise be unrelated to the seminary, but they must all have expertise in Systematic Theology or a subject area related to the proposed dissertation topic. The committee examining an interdisciplinary proposal must include at least one examiner with expertise in the second discipline.⁶ The oral examination will last approximately two and one-half hours.

Preparation

Written Exams and Student-Specific Reading List

All doctoral students in Systematic Theology are expected to have a solid working knowledge of Reformed theology from their prior studies. Any weaknesses in this area should be remedied before the student negotiates the student-specific comprehensive exam reading list with his or her supervisor. The student-specific reading list should be crafted to familiarize students with the breadth and depth of the discipline of Systematic Theology, including its historical development, diversity of traditions, relations to other branches of theology, and perennial and contemporary questions. To achieve this, students are expected to read broadly from a wide variety of summaries of theology (ordinarily about 4,000 pages) and more extensively and deeply in prolegomena and at least one supervisor-approved loci outside the student's dissertation area (ordinarily about 5,000 pages), as well as interdisciplinary readings in Biblical Studies and Historical Theology (ordinarily about 500 pages each, 1,000 pages combined).

Students and Supervisors shall use the documents "[Comprehensive Exam Reading Lists for Systematic Theology](#)" and [Interdisciplinary Reading List](#) as a starting point for negotiating a student-specific reading list of about 10,000 pages for the written exams. The student should be able to summarize the contents, arguments, and conclusions of the works included in the student-specific reading list as well as related trends and issues in the discipline.

It is strongly recommended that the student begin reading the works included in the student-specific reading list as early as possible after matriculation to facilitate sustained reflection on the readings and to promote their integration in his or her coursework. The final reading list will ordinarily include some readings students completed during their coursework as well as other readings to supplement and complement their previous work.

Analytic Bibliographic Essay and Dissertation-Specific Reading List

The dissertation-specific reading list (ordinarily 5,000 pages) is generated through the student's development of the dissertation proposal as a doctoral student. The student should regularly consult with his or her supervisor, who must approve the dissertation-specific reading list on which the Analytic Bibliographic Essay is based. Readings required by the dissertation-specific reading list should also be begun in advance and be largely completed before the student registers for ST991 Dissertation Proposal.

⁶ The oral examination may be attended *ex officio* by the President, the Academic Dean, the Director of the Doctoral Program, and any member of the Board of Trustees in the role of observer.

Scheduling

It is the responsibility of the student, in consultation with his or her supervisor, to schedule the comprehensive examination.

- Students shall notify their supervisor of their desire to schedule the comprehensive examination 3–6 months before the anticipated completion of their coursework.
- Students cannot sit for their written or oral exams until all coursework is complete (with the exception of up to one-half of ST992 Practicum).
- The comprehensive exams, including written and oral components, must be completed within three (3) months of completing all coursework.
- The Analytical Bibliographic Essay and an approved Dissertation Proposal must be submitted four (4) weeks prior to sitting for the written exams.⁷
- The three written exams and oral exam shall be taken at Puritan Reformed (or from a distance if permitted; see footnote above) within a four-week period. Students shall sit for all three written exams within the first 10 days of this four-week period. Upon passing the written exams, the oral exam shall be undertaken within the final week of this four-week period.
- The dissertation supervisor will announce the date of the oral comprehensive examination to the Registrar and to the seminary faculty, ordinarily at a regular faculty meeting.

Once scheduled, no change in the scheduled date of any component of the comprehensive examination will be permitted apart from extraordinary circumstances as determined by the supervisor, Registrar, Academic Dean, and Director of the Doctoral Program.

Procedures and Methods of Evaluation

Written Exams

The three written exams shall be evaluated by the supervisor and co-advisor; they are to be graded on a Pass/Fail basis. At least four (4) passing grades of the six grades assigned by the two examiners (each examiner assigning one grade for each section) are required for the student to sustain the written examination as a whole.

In attributing a passing grade for any of the three sections, the supervisor may, in consultation with the co-advisor, give specific advice for further work or may add conditions that must be met before a Pass is granted for the examination as a whole. In the case of a Fail, the student may retake the examination (in part or in whole, as appropriate) after further preparation unless the examiners agree that the student should not proceed further in the program. No part of the written component may be attempted more than twice. The supervisor and co-advisor shall communicate their decision to the student, registrar, dean, and director of the doctoral program within two (2) weeks of the supervisor's receipt of the exam.

Oral Exam

⁷ The dissertation proposal, composed in accordance with the syllabus for ST991 Dissertation Proposal, must be approved by the dissertation supervisor and co-supervisor and one PRTS faculty member with the requisite specialization (two if the dissertation is interdisciplinary) at least four (4) weeks before the beginning of the oral comprehensive examination. The supervisor will distribute the proposal to the examiners within one (1) week of receipt.

Upon successful completion of the written component, the student proceeds to the oral component of the examination. The oral examination involves an assessment of the student's three written exams, Analytical Bibliographic Essay, Dissertation Proposal and competencies directly related to it, and ability to articulate, explain, and defend his or her integration of faith and scholarship. The following competencies and dispositions are particularly important:

- Approaching the material and interaction from the vantage point of faith governing intellect.
- Interacting fairly and fruitfully with other scholars and their output relating to the dissertation.
- Sufficiently grasping the potential, challenge, and value of their dissertation topic and the method(s) they have selected.
- Meaningfully engaging other scholars, even from other disciplines, and interacting with them in ways that lead to fruitful learning on all parts.

The oral comprehensive examination proceeds as follows:

1. The oral comprehensive examination is chaired by the dissertation supervisor, who is not one of the examiners.
2. The oral comprehensive examination is opened and closed with prayer by the dissertation supervisor or designee, and proceeds in rounds as follows:

a. Review of the three written exams (30 minutes)

Each examiner is invited to ask the student follow-up questions on his or her written exams (5 minutes per examiner). The questions may seek clarification or elaboration, or they may correct or critique weak or flawed answers. The student is then asked to reflect (10 minutes) on what he or she has learned from the written exams concerning the following three areas:

- i. Where fault-lines of scholarship currently lie and how to address them;
- ii. What areas of scholarship to which they need further exposure; and
- iii. Which areas bear most directly on their research.

b. Review of Analytical Bibliographic Essay (40 Minutes)

The student offers an oral summary of the Analytical Bibliographic Essay (15 minutes), after which each examiner is invited to lead a discussion (5-7 minutes per examiner) with the student about the Analytical Bibliographic Essay.

Break (10 minutes)

c. Review of Dissertation Proposal (40 minutes)

The student offers an oral summary of the Dissertation Proposal (15 minutes), after which each examiner is invited to lead a discussion (5-7 minutes per examiner) with the student about the Dissertation Proposal.

d. Faith and Scholarship Presentation (30 minutes)

The student gives a presentation on specific ways in which their faith influences their scholarship (10 minutes), after which each of the four examiners then leads a discussion (5 minutes per examiner) with the student about the intersection of faith and scholarship.

Upon the completion of the oral comprehensive examination the student shall leave the room while the examiners meet in private for at most one hour to discuss the comprehensive examination. The dissertation supervisor will chair the meeting and invite each examiner to offer a brief verbal assessment of the student's performance in the following four areas:

- (i) The written exams;
- (ii) The Analytical Bibliographic Essay;
- (iii) The Dissertation Proposal; and
- (iv) The presentation of the student's integration of faith and scholarship.

Each examiner will then be asked to vote Pass/Fail for each of these four (4) parts of the oral exam. The student sustains the entire comprehensive examination if at least three-fourths of the votes cast are Pass. This requires twelve (12) Pass votes out of a total of sixteen (16) votes cast by a four-examiner committee. In attributing a Pass (i.e. at least 3 "Pass" votes) for any section of the oral exam, a majority (51% or more) of the examiners may advise further work or may add conditions that must be met before a Pass is granted for the examination as a whole.

Once the examiners have concluded their discussion, the doctoral student will be summoned and the supervisor will communicate the result to the student. In the case of a Fail, the student may retake the oral examination (in part or in whole, as appropriate) after further preparation unless the examiners agree that the student should not proceed further in the program. No component of the oral examination may be attempted more than twice.

The dissertation supervisor will inform the Registrar, Academic Dean, and Director of the Doctoral Program of the result of the comprehensive examination within one week of the date of the oral exam.

APPENDIX I

CAPSTONE PROJECT: SPIRITUAL FORMATION

The capstone project aims to capture the student's spiritual formation at the time of the comprehensive examination. The capstone paper is written upon completion of all other coursework, during the preparation time of the comprehensive examination. It should be submitted to the advisor four (4) weeks prior to the date of the Comprehensive Examination. The paper shall include critical reflection of approximately 6,000 words on the following:

1. Define piety and spirituality from a Scriptural perspective (ca. 1,500 words)
2. Define piety and spirituality from a Reformed theological perspective (ca. 1,500 words)
3. Describe your spiritual formation during your doctoral studies (ca. 3,000 words).

APPENDIX J

DOCTORAL STUDIES AGREEMENT

By signing this agreement, I, [...] accept or decline the offer of admission into the Doctoral Program at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary. I understand that this Doctoral Program is a fully-funded tuition study.

By signing and accepting the admission into the Doctoral Program, I agree to abide by the following:

1. I will: **(1)** attend all courses required of me, whether taken on campus or via live-stream, **(2)** attend a minimum of seven (7) academic seminars and/or colloquia related to the Doctoral Program (whether on campus or via live-stream) and provide a written summary of each to the program Director, and **(3)** attend all chapel services when on campus. Exceptions to these requirements are allowed only in case of verifiable hardship presented in writing to the Director of the Doctoral Program.
2. While in my coursework phase, I will continue to be enrolled in a minimum of 6 credits for each six-month period.
3. I will meet the residency and academic requirements of the Doctoral Program as stated in the version of the PhD Handbook in effect upon my matriculation.
4. I understand that I must complete each semester with the required minimum GPA of 3.50, and that failure to maintain the minimum GPA will result in academic probation and possible withdrawal as outlined in the Seminary's Academic Policies.
5. I understand that full payment in the amount of US \$10,000 is required for withdrawal or dismissal from PRTS, whether administratively, ecclesiastically, or voluntarily.
6. After completion of my studies, I pledge to serve my country of origin (or a country of similar economic standing and development). If I fail to do so, I will reimburse the seminary in the amount of US \$10,000.
7. I remain personally responsible for any costs encountered during my doctoral studies above and beyond the fully-funded tuition.
8. I will refrain from personal fund-raising (outside of my personal family context) of any kind within the PRTS community and among its supporters.
9. I understand that failure to sign and accept this agreement within one (1) month from the date of receipt of this agreement annuls my admission into the doctoral program.
10. By signing this agreement, I agree to indemnify and hold harmless PRTS and its Board of Trustees from any claims above the agreed-upon terms of this letter.

Please circle one: Accept Decline

Date: _____

Student Signature: _____

Student Name: _____

APPENDIX K

ASSESSMENT GRID FOR EXAMINERS OF PRTS DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS

The following foci are to be used in assessing the degree to which the dissertation meets the stated learning outcomes of the Doctoral Program. Each of them should be discussed in appropriate depth in the examiner's written report.

Foci of Assessment

1. Canvasses adequately and assesses critically the present state of knowledge relevant to the dissertation.
2. Includes extensive, relevant interaction with primary source(s) and secondary literature in English and other relevant languages.
3. Evidences independent, critical analysis of secondary literature.
4. Argues for its claims clearly, fairly, and conclusively.
5. The project as a whole constitutes original research that makes a substantial contribution to the field of study.
6. Fulfills the stated research aims, articulates and employs appropriate method(s).
7. Demonstrates its relevance for the church.
8. Presentation is suitably structured and is free of errors in grammar, syntax, and form.

Recommendations (choose one)

The examiner shall state in his or her report which of the following applies as an overall assessment of the dissertation:

- Pass
- Conditional Pass, requiring that minor corrections and/or modifications as specified in the examiner's report be implemented to the satisfaction of the supervisor.
- Conditional Pass, requiring that major corrections and/or modifications as specified in the examiner's report be implemented to the satisfaction of the supervisor.
- Fail: Recommend that the student rewrite and resubmit the thesis in light of the critiques and observations in the examiner's report.
- Fail: Recommend that the student not receive the doctoral degree.

APPENDIX L

THE PUBLIC DEFENSE OF THE DISSERTATION

The following guidelines pertain to the public defense of the dissertation:

- The defense shall take place at the main campus of PRTS. The defense shall be chaired by the President, Vice-President, or Academic Dean, who will open with prayer.
- The Chair will invite the student to summarize the importance, findings, and contribution of the study (approximately 10 minutes).
- The Chair will then invite selected members of the faculty (except for the supervisor) and the other members of the panel to question the candidate, by rotation (approximately 35 minutes).
- The Chair may grant special permission to elders or pastors to ask a question of the candidate.

The defense shall continue for exactly one hour after the candidate reads the opening pre-defense formula.

- Upon completion of the defense, the faculty and all members of the panel leave the room to deliberate and render an assessment of the defense.
- Upon the return of the faculty and other members of the panel, the student is informed of the results of their deliberation by the Chair.
- The supervisor will then offer an *oratio laudatio* that may incorporate the results of the external examiners. The *oratio laudatio* shall not exceed ten minutes.
- The ceremony will then be closed with prayer by the Chair.

Order of Ceremony

All will stand when the faculty, followed by the doctoral candidate, enters the room.

1. Opening by the President/Vice-President/Academic Dean of the Seminary

The Chair requests that all those present be seated and opens the meeting with these words:

“I declare this public meeting of the academic defense to be opened and I will lead in prayer.”

This prayer is to be closed as follow:

“We turn to Thee, almighty and merciful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the fountain of all wisdom and knowledge. We humbly beseech Thee to enlighten our minds, sanctify our lips, and open our ears through the grace of Thy Spirit, so that words of truth and peace may be spoken with competence, converting many with deeds—to Thy honor and the salvation of many. Graciously hear us through Thy Beloved Son, our only Savior, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit be praised, honored, and glorified forever. Amen.” (Voetius, 1636)

The Chair shall then address the doctoral candidate:

“Ms./Mrs./Mr. [name], doctoral candidate, please present yourself for the defense of your dissertation.”

The Chair then requests the candidate to take the lectern and read the pre-defense formulary.

2. The Reading of the Pre-Defense Formulary by the Candidate

The candidate shall read the following:

“On the authority of the President of the Seminary, I am ready for the public defense of my dissertation, entitled [title of dissertation] to the best of my ability, in order to obtain the title of Doctor of Philosophy. I will do so with the prayer that He in Whose light alone we will see light, will grant me His wisdom and strength. I request of all who seek to please me by their opposition against my dissertation, that they will state their objections clearly and concisely.”

The candidate then presents a ten-minute summary of the importance, findings, and contribution of the study.

3. The Defense

The President/Vice-President/Academic Dean shall then state:

“I now invite [name of professor] to present their question clearly and concisely, and the candidate to respond.”

Each examiner will be given the chance to ask one question in turn. Questions are to be relatively brief and concise. The candidate shall respond for approximately five minutes to each question in turn. The Chair will cycle through the examiners a first time, and again if necessary, until one hour has elapsed.

4. “Hora Est” (It is Time) and Conclusion

The Registrar shall announce “Hora Est” exactly **one hour after the reading of the pre-defense formula, after which** the questioner or candidate completes his or her sentence and the defense ends.

The Chair requests the doctoral candidate to read the post-defense formula.

5. The Reading of the Post-defense Formulary by the Candidate

The candidate shall then read the following statement:

“Now that the defense of my dissertation has come to its conclusion, and before the faculty will deliberate as to whether I may be granted the title of Doctor of Philosophy, may I, first of all, give thanks to God, for all His goodness shown to me during my studies and in this ceremony; may I also express my gratitude to the President of the seminary for his permission and to the faculty for their co-operation; to my supervisor(s) for their advice; to my opponents for the honor of their opposition; and to all who have raised the solemnity of this gathering by their presence.”

After reading this formula, the Chair will announce:

“The faculty will now leave the room to deliberate. I invite you all to remain here while this deliberation occurs.”

6. Deliberation

The President and faculty will deliberate on the defense as briefly as reasonably possible, and upon the decision to grant the degree of Doctor of Philosophy will re-enter the room.

7. The Pronouncement of the Judiciary

The Chair shall then state:

“In grateful acknowledgment of God’s benevolence bestowed on this seminary, and in dependence on Him, and being appointed by the Board of Trustees, and in consultation with the faculty concerning your defense of the doctoral dissertation, I have been granted to award you [name] with the title of Doctor of Philosophy with all the rights and privileges appertaining thereto. The degree of Doctor of Philosophy will be awarded on [date] to you [name]. I do this trusting God Almighty – from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.”

8. *Oratio Laudatio* by the Supervisor

The Chair then invites the supervisor to offer an *oratio laudatio*, which shall not exceed ten minutes.

The *oratio laudatio* may include the following elements:

- Congratulations to the new Doctor of Philosophy;
- A brief overview of the study (if necessary);
- A succinct overview of the supervisor’s personal interaction with student;
- A brief overview of the doctoral dissertation, underscoring its study for the church and the academy, and include statements of examiners (with or without naming them);
- Concluding best wishes for the new Doctor of Philosophy.

9. Closure

The Chair shall announce:

“I will now lead in a prayer of thanksgiving. Will all please stand?”

The prayer is to be concluded with these words:

“Lord our God, we thank Thee and praise Thy holy name for the blessing that Thou has bestowed upon us. Grant that this work, rewarded by Thy favor in this hour, will be fruitful for the edification of Thy Church and the furtherance of Thy Kingdom. To Thee, the only wise God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be all praise and glory, now and forevermore. Amen.”

Finally, the Chair shall announce:

“I now declare this public meeting of the academic defense to be closed. I invite all present to witness the signing of the diploma and dissertation by the faculty, and to congratulate the new Doctor.”

After proceeding out, all faculty members present will sign the diploma and dissertation at the back of the chapel, where the new Doctor of Philosophy is congratulated. Pictures will be taken with the entire faculty.