

Doctor of Philosophy in Theology

Handbook

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Villanova University
Department of Theology and Religious Studies

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1 Summary

1. Since its founding by the Order of St. Augustine in 1842, Villanova University has been rooted in religious and theological studies and dialogue. The doctoral program in Roman Catholic Theology expands upon this tradition, introducing a level of study and engagement that affirms the University's commitment to developing a comprehensive worldview of religion and faith. Through this program, Villanova is preparing the next generation of theologians—scholars who are not only skilled in teaching, research and scholarship, but also versed in the cultural contexts that shape our modern world.

2. The program aims to relate faith to culture in our contexts just as Augustine did in his. Inasmuch as Augustine's theology related faith, reason, and culture, the doctoral program by its very focus embodies the Augustinian tradition. This tradition embraces the study of faith and culture from multiple theological perspectives, conferring a breadth of inquiry and a distinctiveness on Villanova's program.

3. While many doctoral programs emphasize specialization, Villanova's program encourages scholars to broaden their expertise and knowledge so that they can actively participate in discussions about the implications of faith and religion in a variety of socio-cultural settings. Exploration and exposition of the Catholic faith encourages the investigation of religious practices, beliefs and traditions to better understand the relationships between faith, reason and culture. Doctoral candidates will develop expertise in two areas of specialization—an interdisciplinary approach that strengthens their ability to think across boundaries and that is in keeping with Villanova's Augustinian heritage—while participation in conferences, world religious gatherings and other scholarly opportunities will expose candidates to new cultures and leading thinkers.

4. An undeniable harmony exists between the program and the University's Mission. It supports the objective to advance the University's Catholic Augustinian identity and enhances its reputation for promoting distinctive, excellent, and innovative yet rigorous graduate education and scholarship. The highly selective program is an important differentiator for Villanova. As the nation's only Augustinian Catholic university, Villanova offers a valuable perspective on global discussions about the Catholic faith, and the Ph.D. program expands its opportunities to participate in these critical conversations.

2 The Handbook

5. The doctoral faculty, with the approval of the Office of Graduate Studies, has adopted this Handbook for the use by both the Ph.D. faculty and Ph.D. students. It describes procedures for a student's advancement toward the Ph.D. degree. Both faculty and students are responsible for ensuring that a student's academic work progresses according to the procedures described in this Handbook.

6. Changes to the degree requirements require a majority vote of those doctoral faculty members who are present and voting at any convened meeting.

7. Students and faculty are also obliged to follow the policies in the Graduate Liberal Arts and Sciences Academic Handbook.

8. Students seeking an exception to the policies outlined in this Handbook submit their request in writing to the chair of the Personnel and Finance Committee for approval.

3 The Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theology

9. Villanova University awards the Doctorate of Philosophy in Theology upon the recommendation of the doctoral faculty in the Graduate Program in Theology.

4 Governance of the Doctoral Faculty in the Areas of Specialization

4.1 Doctoral Faculty

10. The members of the doctoral faculty are those full-time members of the TRS Department who have met the requirements for teaching in the Ph.D. Program. They are substantively involved in serving in a combination of the following capacities: As instructors and/or mentors of doctoral students; co-directors of dissertations or members of students' dissertation boards; members on committees essential to the administration of the doctoral program; and as teachers of such Ph.D. seminars as determined by their respective areas.

4.2 Area Faculty

11. Each member of the doctoral faculty is considered as belonging to one area of specialization but may be actively involved in more than one area as affiliate faculty. Any reconfiguration of these areas, and the establishment of any new area, is subject to the approval of the doctoral faculty.

4.2.1 Area Coordinators

12. Each area selects an area coordinator who serves a term of two years. The coordinator normally will not serve more than two successive terms and may be removed from office by a majority vote of the whole membership of the area concerned (excluding the sitting Coordinator).

13. The responsibilities of the area coordinator include but are not limited to: (a) scheduling and convening a meeting of all members of the area once per semester; (b) conducting its meetings; (c) supervising the review of applications for admission that are relevant to the area; (d) reporting to the doctoral program co-director all relevant details of the admissions process which fall to the area, including the drafting of the final list of candidates for each admissions cycle; (e) and, in consultation with area faculty, determining the required area courses, including monitoring details that might be pertinent to the required course rotation as determined by the Department chairperson.

14. Area coordinators *ex officio* are members of the Committee for Admissions and of the Advisory Committee.

4.2.2 Responsibilities of Areas

15. Within each area, faculty specify and revise the course or courses of study according to (a) the instructions in this handbook and (b) any procedures they establish. The work of each area in administering the course of study of students within that area is subject to the general oversight of the Doctoral Program Committee.

16. Each area is responsible for the screening of those applications for admission to doctoral studies in their area that have been forwarded to them by the Committee for Admissions and for making recommendations to the Committee regarding admission to the program. The precise procedure and structures for meeting this responsibility are decided upon by a majority of those area members present and voting but must follow the standards established by the Committee.

4.3 Doctoral student representatives

17. The doctoral students elect two representatives to serve on the Doctoral Program Committee and the Advisory Committee for a one-year term. Representatives will normally not serve more than two consecutive terms. The representatives should reflect the diverse perspectives of the doctoral students.

4.4 Doctoral Program Committee

18. The Doctoral Program Committee has the following membership:

- b) Doctoral Program Co-Director for Programming (Committee Chair)
- c) Doctoral Program Co-Director for Admissions
- d) Director of the Heart of Teaching Program
- e) Department Chairperson
- f) Two doctoral student representatives

19. The Committee is responsible for administering all aspects of the doctoral program, including

- a) Implementing, improving, and, when necessary, adjusting (via majority vote) the policies outlined in this Handbook;
- b) developing, in consultation with the Advisory Committee as needed, proposals for changes to program requirements to be submitted to the doctoral faculty for approval;
- c) program assessment.

4.5 Personnel and Finance Committee

20. The Personnel and Finance Committee consists of

- b) Doctoral Program Co-Director for Admissions (Committee Chair)
- c) Doctoral Program Co-Director for Programming
- d) Director of the Heart of Teaching Program
- e) Department Chairperson

21. The Committee oversees and decides issues pertaining to individual PhD students, to PhD faculty, and financial concerns of the PhD Program. In particular, it

- f) oversees and evaluates the progress of individual students and the successful completion of their doctoral work;
- g) resolves, if necessary, in consultation with other concerned parties, any issues pertaining to individual students or faculty;
- h) reviews and, if necessary, via consultation with other concerned parties, resolves the requests of individual students or of faculty members for exceptions to the policies stated in this Handbook;
- i) resolves issues pertaining to the program budget.

4.6 Committee for Admissions

22. The Committee for Admissions consists of the doctoral program co-directors and the area coordinators. It is chaired by the doctoral program co-director for admissions and is responsible for:

- a) Developing standards for evaluating applications.
- b) Performing the initial evaluation of the applications in light of the program's requirements for admission.
- c) Forwarding applications for review to the respective area coordinators.
- d) Generating a final ranked list of the reviewed applications, which is used as the basis for determining the issuance of offers of admission to the Program.

4.7 Advisory Committee

23. The Advisory Committee consists of the members of the Doctoral Program Committee and area coordinators and is chaired by the doctoral program co-director for programming. It is normally convened once per year by its chair.

24. It ensures that the program goals are achieved and the program focus is maintained, and it consults as needed with the Doctoral Program Committee on any proposals for changes to program requirements.

5 The Program

5.1 Focus of Doctoral Studies

5.1.1 Faith and Culture

25. Enriched by the tradition of St. Augustine, whose theology powerfully related faith, reason, and culture, the Ph.D. in Theology Program envisions “understanding what we believe” (or, as Anselm of Canterbury later reformulates, “faith seeking understanding”) as *faith engaging culture* and develops this particular relationship within the Catholic and Augustinian traditions.

5.1.2 Integration of Knowledge

26. With the integration of theological and cultural ways of knowing as objectives, the Program pursues the faith and culture relationships from the entire range of theological perspectives. That is, no single theological discipline studies *faith engaging culture* in isolation. It is accomplished by placing diverse theological perspectives in dialogue with each other. In other words, Catholic theological studies in the Augustinian tradition are inclusive of all dimensions of faith, worship, and human experience, that is, of theory and praxis, social justice and service, ecclesial traditions and cultural pluralism; span ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary thought; and are multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and integrative.

5.1.3 Meeting Cultural and Ecclesial Needs

27. Reflecting on Christian faith engaging culture, the Program retrieves traditions for the present and develops new possibilities for Christian experience in the third millennium. It meets *cultural needs* by investigating the plausibility and efficacy of Christian faith from within contemporary culture, and *ecclesial needs* by discerning the unity and prophetic mission of the body of Christ amid diverse ecclesial visions and placing the Church in dialogue with culture and culture in dialogue with the Church. Such dialogue is relevant to both the Church and society because its outcomes aim at uniting theory with practice, as well as heart, mind, and hands, and at attending to local and global contexts.

5.1.4 Education for the Future

28. Students advance this approach to the critical, systematic reflection on the life of faith and, in so doing, make Augustine’s way of “doing theology” relevant to society in the third millennium. They

- a) investigate the implications of theological knowing and cultural expressions of that knowledge, as well as the influence of culture on theology;
- b) study these relations from multiple theological perspectives and acquire expertise in two of them; and

- c) prepare themselves to sufficiently master these perspectives for conducting interdisciplinary, integrative, and innovative research, for becoming leaders in ministry, education, or other social justice-oriented careers, and for teaching in secondary or higher educational settings, such as high schools, colleges, universities, and seminaries .

5.2 A Combined M.T.S./Ph.D. Program

29. The Program leads students with bachelor's degrees incrementally toward the doctorate in theology and combines two degree programs. After passing the first portfolio review, students are awarded the Master of Theological Studies. After completing all degree requirements, including the Heart of Teaching Program, students are awarded the Doctor of Philosophy in Theology.

5.3 Program Goals and Learning Outcomes

5.3.1 Program Goals

Goal 1: Formulate Faith/Culture Relationship(s)

Objective A: Generate original understandings of the faith/culture relationship(s), with attention to the experiences of diversity/inclusion, power, privilege, and marginalization.

Objective B: Formulate advanced, interdisciplinary, integrative, and/or inclusive approaches to the analysis of culture(s) and the dimensions of faith and lived experience.

Goal 2: Communicate Knowledge

Objective A: Advance theological knowing in the Catholic Augustinian tradition as a basis for transformative action in the world.

Objective B: Assume the role of a productive, ethical, intellectual, and socially responsible leader, scholar, and teacher.

5.3.2 Learning Outcomes

5.3.2.1 First (Integration) Portfolio

Goal 1: Analyze Faith/Culture Relationship(s)

Objective A: Identify faith/culture relationship(s), with attention to the experiences of diversity/inclusion, power, privilege, and marginalization.

Objective B: Use scholarly methods for the interpretation of diverse religious/theological texts and related media.

Goal 2: Evaluate the Christian Theological Tradition

Objective A: Appraise the vocabulary, sources, beliefs, historical developments and diversity within the Christian tradition, with attention to experiences of power, privilege, and marginalization.

Objective B: Assess the reciprocal interaction of practices and beliefs arising from the Catholic and Augustinian traditions with diverse cultural, ecumenical/inter-faith, and/or local/global contexts.

Goal 3: Apply Knowledge

Communicate effectively the relevance of theological/religious practices, concepts, and beliefs for personal, communal, societal, and global living, in service of transformative action.

5.3.2.2 Second (Synthesis) Portfolio

Goal 1: Evaluate Faith/Culture Relationship(s)

Objective A: Evaluate faith/culture relationship(s), with attention to the experiences of diversity/inclusion, power, privilege, and marginalization.

Objective B: Use scholarly methods for the interpretation of diverse religious/theological texts and related media.

Goal 2: Demonstrate Research Aptitude

Objective A: Explain the major trends, issues, and inquiry standards in one's research specialization(s).

Objective B: Integrate one's position in relation to one's research specialization(s) into a coherent framework of understanding.

Goal 3: Synthesize Knowledge

Objective A: Communicate effectively the relevance of theological/religious practices, concepts, and beliefs for personal, communal, societal, and global living.

Objective B: Articulate a vision for inquiry in the Catholic Augustinian tradition as a basis for transformative action in the world.

5.3.2.3 Third (Evaluation) Portfolio

Goal: Evaluate Knowledge

Objective A: Critically evaluate one's professional growth and development in one's research specialization(s).

Objective B: Clarify one's intended contributions to theological inquiry in the Catholic Augustinian tradition as a basis for transformative action in the world.

Objective C: Formulate a cogent account of one's vision of oneself as a member of the professional community/ies of one's research specialization(s).

5.3.2.4 Dissertation Proposal and Colloquium

Goal 1: Design a feasible research project that is methodologically grounded in interdisciplinary and integrative modes of inquiry, attending to the student's two areas of specialization.

Goal 2: Articulate and justify the proposed project's focus and methods.

Goal 3: Communicate how the proposed project contributes to understanding the relationship between faith and culture, to theological knowing in the Augustinian tradition, and how it offers a basis for transformative action.

5.3.2.5 Dissertation and Colloquium

Goal 1: Conduct independent, original research based on the approved Dissertation Proposal.

Goal 2: Publicly demonstrate scholarly competence and creativity by communicating the dissertation's claims, methods, and results and responding effectively to the dissertation board's questions and comments.

5.4 Areas of Specialization

30. The Program offers four distinct areas of specialization: Biblical Interpretation, Systematic and Constructive Theology, Christian Spirituality, and Christian Ethics.

31. To relate faith and culture in a critical, Augustinian way, students choose two areas for their specialized course work and dissertation research, sufficiently mastering the two for conducting interdisciplinary and integrative research.

5.5 Program Timeline

32. Full-time students are expected to spend seven semesters completing THL course work and additional five semesters completing the degree. (Unless otherwise specified, "semester" always refers to regular fall/spring terms.) Normally, the student's course of study follows the following timeline:

By the end of semester four of residence	First Portfolio Review
At beginning of semester seven of residence	Second Portfolio Review
At the end of semester seven of residence	Conclusion of coursework (except Heart of Teaching)

Semester eight of residence	Dissertation Proposal
Semester ten of residence	Dissertation Progress Review
At beginning of semester eleven of residence	Third Portfolio Review
By semester nine of residence	Heart of Teaching Program
Semester twelve of residence	Dissertation Colloquium

5.6 The Heart of Teaching Program

33. The Heart of Teaching Program introduces students to the theory and practice of theological education and college level teaching in a structured learning environment. It emerges from within the distinct teaching and learning paradigm that the Augustinian tradition inspires. Details of the vision, learning goals and structure of the Heart of Teaching program can be found in the Manual.

5.6.1 Education Seminars

34. By year four of full-time residence, each student enrolls in two education seminars, the first focusing on pedagogical theory and practices, and the second entails a teaching apprenticeship with a faculty mentor. The seminars are structured as a developmental process that enables students to transition from their role as a “senior learner” through “classroom apprenticeship” to a confident “junior colleague,” prepared to function effectively in their first professional appointment. The seminars attend to four critical areas of teaching and learning:

- a) philosophy and purposes;
- b) planning and design of educational experiences;
- c) teaching/learning strategies; and
- d) assessment of student learning.

5.6.2 Supervised Teaching

After successful completion of the two education seminars, students teach a section of THL 1000 with supervision.

5.7 Mentorship

35. Upon entering the program, students are encouraged to form mentoring relationships with one faculty member from each area of specialization. Mentors, as distinct from the program adviser, are a point of contact for questions about the area, for developing research and dissertation project ideas, for choosing dissertation co-directors, for choosing courses and other formational experiences in light of a student’s trajectory in the area, and for supporting the student’s general professional development.

36. Mentor-mentee relationships are initiated by mutual agreement between the student and the faculty member for one year, and, by mutual agreement, may be continued for a second year. The student informs the program adviser about their choice of mentor. Once a student chooses their dissertation co-director in the area (i.e., by the end of their second year in the program), the dissertation co-director assumes the role of mentor. As a faculty mentor is intended to help students discern the direction of their program, mentors may, but do not necessarily have to be, the same as a student's future dissertation co-director in the area.

5.8 Academic Career Development

37. Throughout the program, the student participates in workshops to develop professional and leadership competencies and in academic career development such as creation of documents for academic and non-academic job markets.

6 Degree Requirements

6.1 Credit Hours Requirement

6.1.1 Overview

38. To fulfill program requirements, all students without credits approved for transfer complete seventy-eight graduate credit hours of course work during the first seven semesters of residence and an additional nine credits in theological education during semesters seven through nine of residence for a total of eighty-seven credits, to earn both degrees. Students also complete zero credit hours in dissertation writing. Details are outlined in the Program Timeline.

39. Students admitted between 2016 and 2020 may, with the approval of the area co-director and the program adviser, replace two courses in each area of specialization with doctoral or Master's level courses from other areas or other departments.

6.1.2 Table of Required Credit Hours

Seventy-eight credit hours	<p>For students admitted between 2016 and 2020: Foundation course work, history of Christianity, Augustinian theological tradition, cultural theory, electives in areas of non-specialization, and seminars in the two areas of specialization</p> <p>For students admitted from 2021 onwards, the following curriculum applies:</p> <p>a. <u>Common Curriculum</u>: Culture (3), Augustinian Tradition (3), History of Church (6) = 12 credit hours.</p>
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	<p>b. <u>Specialized Curriculum</u>: 24 required credit hours in each area of specialization = 48 credit hours for both areas of specialization.</p> <p>c. <u>Elective Curriculum</u>: Free elective credits, chosen in consultation with the adviser and dissertation co-directors in view of a student's prior theological training, other experiences, and goals for the program, especially their research. These courses may be PhD seminars or MA-level courses, taken within the TRS or in other departments = 18 credit hours.</p>
Nine credit hours	Theological Education Seminars
Zero credit hours	Dissertation Writing

6.2 Language Proficiency

40. Ordinarily, each student must demonstrate reading and comprehending competency in those languages that are relevant to the student's fields of study.

41. Precise requirements are determined in consultation with the adviser and the two dissertation co-directors after the student has chosen the directors, at the latest by April 15 of the fourth semester in residence (full-time students).

42. All language requirements must be met before the student is admitted to the dissertation proposal colloquium (that is, by the eighth semester of residence), unless otherwise specified.

43. Normally, proficiency in one foreign language, that is, not English, is required of all students.

6.2.1 Area Requirements: Biblical Interpretation

44. A student in the Biblical Interpretation area is expected to demonstrate proficiency in biblical Hebrew and Greek. Proficiency in at least one of the two required biblical languages (that is, the primary research language) must be demonstrated before the beginning of the student's third semester of study.

6.2.2 Satisfying the Language Requirement

45. The language requirement can be satisfied in one of the following ways:

a) Earning a passing score on a placement examination administered by a Villanova University language department or program.

- b) Earning at least a “B” grade in a language course (or courses) at the intermediate level taken in a Villanova University language department or program.
- c) Earning a passing grade in a Villanova summer language workshop.
- d) Completing a language course at other institutions if approved by the adviser.
- e) Passing a language examination in the Graduate Program in Theology.
- f) Formal certification of language competency by a dissertation co-director.

After the language requirement is satisfied, the student informs the adviser.

6.2.3 Language Credits

46. Students in need of remedial language work are permitted to enroll in undergraduate language courses at Villanova. These courses do not count toward the requirements of the Program. Students contact the adviser and the Dean of Graduate Studies for approval before enrolling in any such course.

47. Summer language workshops are offered by the Office of Graduate Studies.

6.2.4 Language Examination Procedures (Program-Internal)

48. If needed, foreign language examinations are administered by the Graduate Program in Theology.

49. In modern language examinations, students spend three hours on two passages in the language they are examined in as part of their language requirements. Each text is approximately 350 words in length. One of the two texts is written for non-specialist audiences (e.g., an encyclopedia article), the other for scholars. The student can consult dictionaries (electronic and print) during the examination. The student answers three comprehension questions per passage. The evaluator grades the examination pass/fail.

50. In examinations in Latin, Greek, or Hebrew, students spend two hours on translating two passages. Each passage is approximately 200 words in length. It is expected that the student will finish about 80% of each text. The student can consult dictionaries (electronic and print) during the examination. The evaluator grades the examination pass/fail.

51. If an evaluation is negative, the student may request from the adviser (a) to retake the examination or (b) an independent review of the examination.

6.3 Portfolio

See the Portfolio Manual.

6.4 Scholarship Expectations

52. Before graduating from the program, all students are expected to have presented a minimum of three conference papers at academic conferences and have at least one scholarly, peer-reviewed article (journal article, book chapter, or comprehensive and critical literature review essay) accepted for publication. Fulfilling the scholarship expectations is part of the requirements for academic good standing.

53. Students who are discerning non-tenure-track careers are encouraged to discuss with their dissertation co-directors and the program adviser alternative forms of communicating their scholarship that contribute to developing their professional profile, and may replace one of these requirements.

6.5 Dissertation Co-Direction

54. Students pursue “faith engaging culture” through the lenses of two areas of specialization and acquire expertise in both areas. To assure that all students graduating from the Program are familiar with, and competent in, studying the relationships between faith and culture from interdisciplinary and integrative theological perspectives, each student will have two dissertation co-directors, one from each of the student’s two areas of specialization.

6.5.1 Eligibility for Co-Direction

55. In principle, a student’s dissertation co-directors must be TRS faculty members and members of the core faculty of the chosen areas of specialization. Co-directors cannot be core faculty of the same area unless an exception is granted by the Personnel and Finance Committee.

56. When dissertation co-directors retire, they are expected to continue as co-directors until the dissertation is completed. However, no retired faculty member may agree to serve as a dissertation co-director. For the purposes of this policy, agreement to serve as dissertation co-director is formally expressed by submission of the co-director form.

6.5.2 Responsibilities of Co-Directors

57. Co-directors serve on the student’s dissertation board, which approves the student’s dissertation proposal and dissertation. They model to the student interdisciplinary and integrative dialogue and cooperatively ensure that the student designs and executes a feasible research project consistent with the program’s interdisciplinary/integrative vision and outcomes.

58. Once the dissertation board has been established and the dissertation proposal accepted, the co-directors determine with the student procedures for guiding them in writing the dissertation and a schedule for submission of materials.

6.5.3 Timeline for Selecting Co-Directors

59. After consultation with faculty in their areas of specialization, full-time students propose two dissertation co-directors. By April 15 of the fourth semester in residence, students must submit the names to the adviser for approval.

60. Dissertation co-direction formally begins at the beginning of the semester following the first portfolio review.

6.6 Dissertation Board

61. The student's (normally) three-person dissertation board consists of the two co-responsible dissertation co-directors and one additional reader from the departmental doctoral faculty belonging to an area outside the student's areas of specialization. In consultation with prospective readers, the student proposes to the adviser the name of the third reader. One of the co-directors chairs the board.

62. The board must be constituted no later than December 1 of the semester preceding the dissertation proposal colloquium.

6.6.1 Outside Reader

63. Any outside reader must have expertise either in one of the student's areas of specialization or in another area relevant to the student's project. The reader may be a member of the Villanova faculty outside the Graduate Program in Theology or someone external to Villanova University. The Personnel and Finance Committee will consider the CV of the proposed outside reader and a brief rationale written by the student and render a decision. An outside reader will be the fourth member of the dissertation board.

64. Outside readers do not receive a compensation for their service on a student's dissertation board.

6.6.2 Responsibilities of the Dissertation Board

65. Board members assure that the dissertation meets the required learning goals and that the student adheres to the required timeline for completing the dissertation. They also read the student's work and approve the dissertation proposal and the dissertation.

66. As primary resources, the co-directors direct the dissertation and guide the research and writing process. The other board member(s) serve(s) as (a) secondary resource(s). At a minimum, the readers are available for consultation in all stages of the process, review the penultimate draft of the dissertation (submitted by January 31) and approve the dissertation for the dissertation colloquium.

6.7 The Dissertation Proposal

67. All dissertation projects must be formally approved. To receive approval, students prepare a written proposal and participate in the dissertation proposal colloquium with the student's dissertation board in the eighth semester of full-time residence. Formal approval of the proposal comes after the colloquium.

6.7.1 Dissertation Proposal and Colloquium Outcomes (*see section 5.3*)

6.7.2 Proposal Content

68. Excluding the cover page, an annotated bibliography, language certification, and the timetable, the proposal narrative should be no more than 3000 words in length. The proposal includes:

- a) Student's name and areas of specialization.
- b) Names of the dissertation co-directors and reader(s).
- c) An abstract (a 250-word summary of the dissertation project).
- d) A proposed title.
- e) A formulation of the issue(s) to be studied, including the main research question(s) and thesis of the project.
- f) A discussion of the state of scholarship—but not necessarily a “literature review”—of the student's project covering both areas that the dissertation aims to integrate and an account of the dissertation's relation to existing scholarship in the area(s).
- g) A statement about the student's method(s) of inquiry.
- h) A statement about the anticipated contribution(s) to knowledge, whether theoretical or practical.
- i) A statement about the way the project meets the dissertation goals.
- j) A tentative outline of major chapters of the dissertation.
- k) A timetable for completion of the dissertation.
- l) An annotated bibliography of approximately 30 texts.
- m) Documents certifying language proficiency.

6.7.3 Registration and Dates

6.7.3.1 Registering for the Proposal Colloquium

69. Full-time students register for the proposal colloquium no later than December 1 of their seventh semester in residence by enrolling in the zero credit course Proposal Colloquium.

6.7.3.2 Proposal Submission Due Date

70. The due date for submission of the written proposal to all members of the dissertation board is ten days prior to the student's colloquium.

71. Members of the doctoral faculty may request the full proposal and make suggestions. Any suggestions for improvement will be sent directly to the dissertation co-directors before the colloquium.

6.7.3.3 Colloquium Date

72. Normally, the proposal colloquium is held in April of a full-time student's eighth semester in residence. The adviser may determine a different schedule in agreement with the student and their dissertation board.

6.7.4 Qualifying for the Proposal Colloquium

73. To qualify for the proposal colloquium, full-time students must be in good academic standing and have completed the second portfolio review, all course work in their areas of specialization, all language requirements, and have made satisfactory progress toward meeting the scholarship expectations.

6.7.5 Colloquium Procedure

74. At the colloquium, the student presents their research project (30 minutes) and discusses it with the members of the dissertation board. The colloquium ordinarily is moderated by the adviser (or another person selected by the adviser) and lasts no longer than 90 minutes.

75. All faculty and students of the Graduate Program in Theology are invited to attend the colloquium.

76. The colloquium moderator may offer anyone in attendance the opportunity to ask a question.

6.7.6 Assessing the Proposal Colloquium

77. Immediately after the colloquium, the dissertation board convenes to decide whether to formally approve the proposal (with or without revisions) or to fail the candidate. Each member provides the chair of the dissertation board with an evaluation of the student's proposal as written and presented. For continuation in the Ph.D. in Theology Program, passing grades from all board members are required.

78. The chair of the dissertation board submits the proposal, its evaluation, and, if applicable, requests for revisions to the program adviser no later than a week after the colloquium. The program adviser will inform the student and the Office of Graduate Studies of the outcome. If a student considers requested revisions to be unfair or unreasonable, they may appeal the Personnel and Finance Committee who will review the proposal and requested revisions.

6.7.7 Failure at the Proposal Colloquium

79. If a student fails the proposal and colloquium, the Personnel and Finance Committee will review their proposal and the dissertation board's rationale for failing to confirm the board's decision or request a review.

80. To remain in good academic standing, students must secure approval of their dissertation proposal by the conclusion of the semester following the completion of course work (normally in the eighth semester of residence). Students who fail to secure approval of their dissertation proposal by the expected deadline lose their good academic standing. They may participate in the colloquium at the next designated time. A failure to pass the colloquium at this second opportunity results in the expulsion from the Program.

6.7.8 Changes to the Dissertation Proposal

81. Once the student has received approval of the proposal, it is expected that the student will complete a dissertation as has been proposed. Major changes to the dissertation project (e.g., a change of direction) may only be made with the written approval of the dissertation co-directors. The co-directors may require a new proposal and, in consultation with the Personnel and Finance Committee, a second dissertation proposal colloquium.

6.8 Ph.D. Candidacy

82. After successfully completing the dissertation proposal colloquium, the student is admitted to Ph.D. Candidacy and registers for Dissertation Writing (zero credits).

6.9 Dissertation

83. The candidate completes a dissertation project that falls within the scope of the Program's vision of faith engaging culture in the Augustinian tradition.

6.9.1 Dissertation and Colloquium Outcomes *(see section 5.3)*

6.9.2 Dissertation Form

84. The final product may be presented in textual form (ordinarily between 75,000 and 80,000 words) or another form. If the candidate chooses, and the dissertation board approves, an alternative form, the final product will consist of a creative artifact accompanied by a text (ordinarily not more than 40,000 words) that discusses in detail the research question, theoretical framework, methods, relationship to earlier research, literature, etc.

6.9.3 Dissertation Progress Review

85. At the end of the second semester of dissertation writing, and before May 15, a dissertation progress review serves as a check-in moment for the student and their dissertation board. The

candidate distributes the work-in-progress to the dissertation board. The chair will convene a meeting of the board with the candidate to discuss the progress and provide feedback on the direction of the dissertation. When the review has been conducted, the chair submits to the adviser a brief summary of the meeting and the student's progress.

86. Failure to maintain progress and successfully complete the review leads to loss of the candidate's good academic standing.

6.9.4 Submitting the Dissertation for Review

87. The due date for submission of the complete draft of the dissertation for review and feedback to the dissertation board is January 31 in year six of full-time residence.

88. The dissertation board reviews the dissertation for its academic soundness and communicates any observations about the dissertation and any necessary changes to the text of the dissertation to the candidate who revises the dissertation in light of this written and oral feedback and submits a final draft to be approved for the colloquium at the latest two weeks prior to the dissertation colloquium date.

6.9.5 Approving the Dissertation for the Dissertation Colloquium

89. One week before the colloquium date at the latest, the dissertation board approves the completed dissertation for the colloquium; unanimous approval by all board members is required. The chair of the board informs the adviser in writing of the decision.

90. The adviser confirms that all degree requirements have been completed, distributes the dissertation abstract to the doctoral faculty, and makes copies of the dissertation available for review.

6.10 The Dissertation Colloquium

6.10.1 Dissertation and Colloquium Outcomes (see section 5.3)

6.10.2 Qualifying for the Dissertation Colloquium

91. To qualify for the colloquium, full-time students must be in good academic standing, have completed the Heart of Teaching Program and met scholarship expectations.

6.10.3 Dissertation Colloquium Registration

92. Full-time candidates register for the colloquium no later than the first week of their twelfth semester in residence by enrolling in Dissertation Colloquium (zero credits).

6.10.4 Dissertation Colloquium Date

93. Normally, the colloquium is held in April. The date of the colloquium must be at least two weeks prior to the Office of Graduate Studies deadline for submitting final dissertation copies. The adviser may determine a different schedule in agreement with the student and their dissertation board.

6.10.5 Dissertation Colloquium Procedure

94. The colloquium ordinarily is moderated by the adviser (or another person selected by the adviser) and is 90 minutes in length. It is open to the public.

95. All faculty and students of the Graduate Program in Theology are invited to attend the colloquium.

96. After the candidate has presented a summary of the research (30 minutes), the members of the dissertation board offer comments and ask questions of the candidate. The colloquium moderator may also offer anyone in attendance the opportunity to ask a question.

97. After the colloquium, the board votes on the suitability of the candidate for receiving the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theology.

6.10.6 Passing the Dissertation Colloquium

98. The dissertation board either passes (with or without revisions) or fails the candidate. The candidate will fail only if serious shortcomings surface at the colloquium and if the board does not unanimously vote to pass the candidate. A candidate who fails the colloquium is awarded the M.T.S. degree. They are not permitted to participate in the colloquium a second time.

99. Minor shortcomings in the dissertation may require revisions of the dissertation before it can be submitted according to Office of Graduate Studies policies. One of the dissertation co-directors will supervise the revision process and certify that any required revisions have been made adequately.

100. The dissertation in its final form must be submitted electronically according to Office of Graduate Studies guidelines and by the published deadline.

7 Policies

7.1 Application and Admission

7.1.1 Admission of Applicants with Bachelor's Degrees

101. The program aims to attract students who wish to pursue theological studies within the Catholic and Augustinian tradition. This vision requires an admission policy that gives preference to admitting applicants with a bachelor's degree to the program.

7.1.2 Admission of Applicants with Graduate Credit Work from Other Institutions

102. We recognize master's level course work completed at other accredited institutions. Admission of such qualified students will be handled on a case-by-case basis after admission to the program, considering:

- a) the applicant's preparedness for entering the program at an advanced level;
- b) the distribution of courses in the applicant's areas of concentration;
- c) smooth integration with program requirements;
- d) the year when the course was taken: Courses taken more than six years ago will be considered for transfer credits if, since completing the course, the applicant (a) has been continuously enrolled in graduate course work or (b) has been working in course work-related fields of employment. In general, courses taken more than 10 years ago will not be considered for transfer credits. This standard is in place to ensure retention of the material studied.
- e) the grade for the course in question (following the policy of Graduate Studies, a grade B or better is required for transfer of credits).

103. Given the above criteria, students who do not hold a graduate degree in Theology from Villanova University may be credited with up to 30 credit hours for course work in religion/theology completed at another accredited institution. Students who graduated with a degree in theology from VU will be credited as many courses as feasibly and responsibly possible toward the combined MTS/PhD program. In determining advanced standing, the following regulations will apply:

- a) Up to 6 credit hours may be transferred per area of specialization; such credits must be from coursework in the student's specializations.
- b) Up to 12 credits may replace free electives; such credits must be from coursework outside of the student's specializations.
- c) Normally, Culture and Augustinian Tradition seminars cannot be transferred unless taken at VU because of the unique profile of the program.
- d) History of Church seminars can be transferred if the equivalent coursework was completed at VU or elsewhere.
- e) Heart of Teaching courses cannot be transferred because of the uniquely Augustinian nature of the program.

A student's transfer credits are determined by the Admissions Committee (if needed, together with a representative of the History of Church faculty), based on a proposal by the co-director for programming, prior to enrollment in the program, and confirmed by Graduate Studies.

Students who receive credit for:

- a) 3 to 9 credit hours of previous course work will be awarded the M.T.S. (but not also the M.A.) upon completion of additional 39-45 credit hours of course work at Villanova (note: the Villanova M.T.S. is a 48 credit hours degree).
- b) 12 to 18 credit hours of previous course work will be awarded the M.A. (but not also the M.T.S.) upon completion of additional 18-24 credit hours of course work at Villanova (note: the Villanova M.A. is a 36 credit hours degree).

For students who transfer 21-30 credit hours of previous course work, the First Portfolio Review will be waived.

7.1.3 Admission to Area Combinations

104. Because learning in the program is governed by the interrelationship of two primary areas of theological inquiry, applicants are admitted to specific area combinations and normally remain within these areas for the duration of their studies.

105. In exceptional cases, students who wish to transfer to another area combination must seek approval by submitting in writing a rationale for the transfer to the Personnel and Finance Committee. Such requests ordinarily must be made before the end of the first semester of residence. The Committee will make a decision in consultation with the faculty in the proposed areas.

7.1.4 Studying Full-time or Part-time

106. The doctoral program is designed primarily for full-time study. Because our goal is to prepare students for both the academy and other professions (e.g., careers in secondary school education, church administration and other forms of ministerial leadership), we may also admit a limited number of students without funding who may study on a part-time basis.

7.1.5 Application Deadline

107. The application deadline is published on the Office of Graduate Studies application webpage. Normally, all students enter the program in the fall semester.

7.1.6 Review of Applications

108. Complete applications will be reviewed by faculty of both areas to which the applicant applied. The Committee for Admissions makes the final decision of admitting applicants.

7.1.7 Application Requirements

- a) Bachelor's Degree, completed by June 1 of year of admission
- b) Curriculum Vitae
- c) Three Letters of Recommendation
- d) Transcripts
- e) G.P.A. of at least 3.75 (graduate degree or undergraduate major)
- f) An essay between 1200 and 1500 words that addresses the prompt as posted on the application webpage.
- g) Interview for Finalists (normally via video conference)

7.2 Time to Degree Completion

109. Funded students normally complete the program within twelve semesters of admission to the program. All degree work must be completed within sixteen semesters of the date of admission per the Time to Complete Degree Policy of the Office of Graduate Studies.

110. Non-funded students may take up to twenty-four semesters to complete all degree requirements for the program per the Time to Complete Degree Policy of the Office of Graduate Studies.

7.3 Academic Advising

111. The doctoral program co-director for programming (or a delegate) acts as primary academic adviser of all doctoral students.

7.4 Residence

112. Assistantships are intended to support a student while in residence. Thus, the Program has a continuous residence policy for recipients of a University assistantship. Such students must register themselves every fall and spring semester until graduation. Students are considered registered when they are enrolled in a minimum of one course, which may include the course in Dissertation Writing.

113. Students who become non-resident without approval forfeit all University financial support.

7.5 Leave of Absence

114. Students in good academic standing may request a leave of absence for exceptional and serious personal, professional, or medical reasons. On the recommendation of the adviser, the Dean of Graduate Studies may grant a leave following Office of Graduate Studies policy.

7.6 Courses Taken at Other Universities

115. Students who register for courses at other universities pay tuition and fees to the host university. A grade of B+ or better is required for transfer of credits.

7.7 Directed Research Credits

116. Directed Research courses are offered in exceptional cases to serve specific research needs of the student or the timely fulfillment of degree requirements. Approval of both the adviser and instructor is required. Such a course must not be offered in the regular rotation of courses.

117. The subject of study, requisite readings etc. will be decided through the initiative of the student and in collaboration with the instructor. Directed Research courses should cover a comparable amount of material and be assessed in a similar manner as regular courses. Their learning outcomes must be such that they demonstrably contribute to the overall fulfillment of the program learning goals

7.8 Style Manual

118. The Graduate Program in Theology requires the most recent edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* for all term papers, theses and dissertations. The *Manual* is available digitally through Falvey Library.

119. It is recommended that students use gender inclusive language to refer to human beings and God, especially in their written assignments.

7.9 Incomplete Grades

120. Students are expected to complete graduate course work during the semester in which the courses are taken. This expectation also guides instructors of graduate courses. Faculty are required to grade student work by the end of the semester in which the course is taught.

121. An 'N' grade should be assigned only by prior arrangement with the student and only in exceptional circumstances and if compelling academic or personal reasons justify an 'N' grade. The student's performance in the course must merit this exception; otherwise, the instructor will assign a grade that reflects both the quality of the work completed and the significance of the work which has not been completed.

122. 'N' grades become 'NF' grades on the student's permanent record unless the 'N' grade is removed or extended according to Office of Graduate Studies policy.

123. The accumulation of more than six credits of N grades, regardless of G.P.A., is considered unsatisfactory. The Personnel and Finance Committee will review the performance of a student who receives more than one N grade in a semester or an N grade in two consecutive semesters.

124. Students with incomplete grades will not be admitted to the dissertation proposal colloquium.

7.10 Student Progress

125. The adviser monitors the progress of doctoral students, especially in the matter of grades, course work and other program requirements. At the end of each academic year, all students shall submit a self-reflection to the adviser which describes the student's perception of their academic progress, notes particular accomplishments, and defines goals for the next steps in the program. If needed, the adviser will schedule a conversation with the student to discuss particular challenges to support the student's success in the program.

126. Faculty are encouraged to reach out to the adviser to share particular issues of concern, or praise a student's significant accomplishments. The adviser will then work with the student (and if needed, other relevant entities) to determine appropriate steps to resolve any issues.

127. At the end of their first year of studies in the program, each first-year student will meet with the program adviser for a substantial evaluative and formative conversation on the basis of their own self-reflection and faculty feedback.

7.11 Academic Good Standing

128. In order to be considered in good standing, a student must make satisfactory academic progress as defined by Office of Graduate Studies policy; maintain a cumulative G.P.A. of at least 3.4; and remain in compliance with all Program requirements, including meeting the various deadlines for the first and second portfolio reviews, the dissertation proposal colloquium, the dissertation colloquium, for scholarship expectations and for removing incomplete grades.

7.12 Dismissal from the Program

129. Students placed on academic probation are expected to perform at a level that will return them to good academic standing at the end of the next semester. A student who fails to return to good academic standing may be dismissed from the program according to Office of Graduate Studies Policy.

130. Students who have completed the requirements for the M.A. or the M.T.S. degree will receive the appropriate degree.

7.13 Financial Support

131. It is our stated goal for full-time students to complete all degree requirements in twelve semesters. The primary goal of financial support is to enable students to complete their degrees in a timely fashion.

7.13.1 Assistantships

132. The Office of Graduate Studies awards assistantships to incoming full-time students that ordinarily are renewed for five further years if academic progress is satisfactory. At full capacity, the six-year program has funding for twenty-four students at any given time. Each full-time assistantship recipient receives full tuition remission and an annual stipend. If an award is declined, it is offered to an alternate recipient selected by the Personnel and Finance Committee.

7.13.2 Assistantships and Good Standing

133. In general, funding is contingent upon good academic standing in the program. All funding agreements for doctoral students may be reviewed at any time by the Personnel and Finance Committee and the Office of Graduate Studies.

7.13.3 Duties of Assistants

134. In years one and two of residence, assistantship recipients are not responsible for any service to the Graduate Program. In semesters five to seven of residence, assistants are expected to work as Research and Teaching Assistants (12 hours a week during each semester). In years five and six of residence, students teach two courses in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies (one supervised course as part of the Heart of Teaching requirements, and a second, independently taught course).

135. Work assignments will be made by the adviser at the beginning of the academic year.

136. If a student chooses not to teach the second independently taught course in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, their stipend will be reduced by the equivalent of a 3-credit, entry-level adjunct stipend in the semester they were scheduled to teach.

7.13.4 Supplementary Funding

137. In addition to the support provided by the Office of Graduate Studies, the PhD Program makes other financial support available to all funded and non-funded students which may be used for the following purposes upon approval by the adviser:

- a) Conference fees, travel, accommodation and food to help underwrite expense for attending conferences to present papers, network with colleagues, or interview for jobs;
- b) Grants for archival or other research related to the dissertation;
- c) Membership fees in professional associations.

7.13.5 Summer Research Fellowships

138. The Dean of Graduate Studies provides summer fellowships to support doctoral student research and scholarship every year. Summer stipends are granted on a competitive basis.

7.13.6 Other Summer Funding

139. The Office of Graduate Studies makes funding available for doctoral students to take coursework at Villanova in the summer. It is a part of a student's regular assistantship funding.

7.13.7 Eligibility for Funding Beyond Six Years

140. Assistantship recipients are not eligible for continued tuition funding, stipends, and travel support beyond their sixth year of residence. Non-funded students are no longer eligible for travel support beyond their twelfth year in the program.

7.13.8 Employment

141. Provided that it is congruous with the student's vocational vision and that any outside employment does not interfere with obligations that the student has to the TRS Department or satisfactory progress toward degree completion, PhD students who receive university funding may be employed on a part-time basis during the academic year beyond their GA and/or TA service to the TRS Department.

Oversight is provided by the PhD program co-director for programming and the department chair with regard to:

- a) Alignment with the student's vocational goals;
- b) Fulfillment of the student's obligations to TRS. and
- c) Maintaining academic good standing.

7.13.9 External Sources of Funding

142. Recipients of external grants may use the funds to supplement a University assistantship.

8 Appendix A: Ph.D. Program Master Timeline

9 Appendix B: Portfolio Manual

10 Appendix C: Heart of Teaching Manual