Doctor of Philosophy in Theology
Handbook
09/20/2017
Villanova University
Department of Theology and Religious Studies

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7 Policies

7.1 Application and Admission
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 of the Office of Graduate Studies in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

3 The Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theology

8. 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

9. 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 of, and mentors to, doctoral students; co-directors of dissertations; 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

10. 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.

Area Coordinators

11. 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).

12. 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.

13. Area coordinators ex officio are members of the Committee for Admissions and of the Advisory Committee.
Responsibilities of Areas

14. 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.

15. 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

16. 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

17. 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) Placement and Professionalization Coordinator
g) Two doctoral student representatives

18. 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

19. The Personnel and Finance Committee consists of

b) Doctoral Program Co-Director for Admissions (Committee Chair)
c) Doctoral Program Co-Director for Programming
20. 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

21. 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

22. 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.

23. 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

Faith and Culture

24. 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.

Integration of Knowledge

25. 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.

Meeting Cultural and Ecclesial Needs

26. 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, or the mind with the heart.

Education for the Future

27. 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 becoming leaders and practitioners of ministry and education, for conducting interdisciplinary, integrative, and innovative research, and for college level teaching.

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

28. 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

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, & 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.

Learning Outcomes

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/interfaith, 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.

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.

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).

Proposal Colloquium

Goal 1: Design a feasible research project that is methodologically grounded in interdisciplinary and integrative modes of inquiry.

Goal 2: Synthesize the relationship between faith and culture as relevant to one’s project.

Goal 3: Envision one’s contributions to theological knowing in the Augustinian tradition.

Dissertation Colloquium

Goal 1: Explore with the dissertation board the dissertation’s claims, methods, and results.

Goal 2: Substantiate publicly the student’s scholarly competence in the chosen areas of research.

5.4 Areas of Specialization


30. 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

31. 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 |
| Semester eight of residence | Dissertation Proposal |
| Semester ten of residence | Dissertation Progress Review |
| At beginning of semester eleven of residence | Third Portfolio Review |
Semesters seven through twelve of residence          Heart of Teaching Program
Semester twelve of residence                      Dissertation Colloquium

5.6 The Heart of Teaching Program

32. 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.

Education Seminars

33. In years four and five of full-time residence, each student enrolls in two education seminars on pedagogical theory and practices. 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.

Supervised Teaching

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

Independent Teaching

34. During year six, students teach one course independently and receive a peer observation by a member of the department faculty. Independent teaching is optional for non-funded students.

5.7 Academic Career Development

35. 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

Overview

36. 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 ten of residence. Students also complete zero credit hours in dissertation writing, for a total of eighty-seven credits, to earn both degrees.

Table of Required Credit Hours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Credit Hours</th>
<th>Requirement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seventy-eight credit hours</td>
<td>Foundation course work, history of Christianity, Augustinian theological tradition, cultural theory, electives, and seminars in the two areas of specialization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine credit hours</td>
<td>Theological Education Seminars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zero credit hours</td>
<td>Dissertation Writing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.2  Language Proficiency

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

38. 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).

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

40. Normally, proficiency in one foreign language is required of all students.

Area Requirements: Biblical Interpretation

41. 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.
Satisfying the Language Requirement

42. 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.

Language Credits

43. 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. Please contact the adviser and the Dean of Graduate Studies for approval before enrolling in any such course.

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

Language Examination Procedures (Program-Internal)

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

46. 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.

47. 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.

48. 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

49. 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 article accepted for publication. Fulfilling the scholarship expectations is part of the requirements for academic good standing.

6.5 Dissertation Co-Direction

50. Students pursue “theology 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 from the student’s two areas of specialization.

Eligibility for Co-Direction

51. 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 members of the same core area faculty, unless an exception is granted by the adviser and the respective area coordinator.

52. 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 signing the co-director form.

Responsibilities of Co-Directors

53. 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.

54. 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.

Timeline for Selecting Co-Directors

55. After consultation with faculty in their areas of specialization, full-time students propose two dissertation co-directors. In the fourth semester in residence, by the end of the second week of classes following the spring semester recess, students must submit the names to the adviser for approval.
56. Dissertation co-direction formally begins at the beginning of the semester following the first portfolio review.

6.6 Dissertation Board

57. The student’s (normally) three-person dissertation board consists of the two 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 reader. One of the co-directors chairs the board.

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

Outside Reader

59. 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.

Responsibilities of the Board

60. 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.

61. Whereas co-directors direct the dissertation, the other board member(s) serve(s) as reader(s) who ensure(s) the quality of the student’s research. Readers address observations directly to the co-directors who then communicate them to the student.

6.7 The Dissertation Proposal

62. 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.

Proposal Outcomes *(see section 5.3)*

Proposal Content

63. Excluding the cover page, a 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 one-page summary).
d) A proposed title.
e) A concise formulation of the issue(s) to be studied.
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.

Registration and Dates

Registering for the Proposal Colloquium

64. Full-time students register for the proposal colloquium no later than December 1 of their seventh semester in residence.

Proposal Submission Due Date

65. The due date for submission of the written proposal to the dissertation co-directors is March 15 of a full-time student’s fourth year in residence.

66. The chair of the dissertation board will distribute the student’s full proposal immediately to the other board members, and the abstract of the proposal to all members of the doctoral faculty.

67. 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 by the end of the seventh day after receiving the proposal.

Colloquium Date

68. Normally, the proposal colloquium is held on the first Friday of April. The adviser may determine a different schedule in agreement with the student and their dissertation board.

Qualifying for the Proposal Colloquium

69. 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.

**Colloquium Procedure**

70. 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.

71. All faculty from the student’s two areas and doctoral students attend the colloquium. All other faculty and students of the Graduate Program in Theology also are invited.

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

**Assessing the Proposal Colloquium**

73. Immediately after the colloquium, the dissertation board convenes to decide whether to formally approve the proposal or whether revisions are required. Each member provides the chair of the dissertation board with an evaluation of the student’s proposal as written and presented. The evaluation is based on a common rubric and graded pass/fail. For continuation in the Ph.D. in Theology Program, passing grades from all board members are required.

74. The chair of the dissertation board submits the proposal and its evaluation to the Personnel and Finance Committee no later than a week after the colloquium. The Personnel and Finance Committee evaluates (within a week) the proposal to ensure that it meets the standards of a dissertation project informed by the Program vision of theology engaging culture in the Augustinian tradition. In principle, the Committee will make minimal recommendations. The chair of the Committee forwards the decision to the members of dissertation board. The Administrative Assistant informs the Office of Graduate Studies which, in turn, officially notifies the student.

**Failure at the Proposal Colloquium**

75. 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.

**Changes to the Dissertation Proposal**

76. 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

77. After successfully completing the dissertation proposal colloquium, the student is admitted to Ph.D. Candidacy and registers for dissertation writing.

6.9 Dissertation Writing

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

Dissertation Outcomes (see section 5.3)

Dissertation Form

79. The final product may be presented in textual form (ordinarily between 75,000 and 80,000 words) or another medium. 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.

Dissertation Progress Review

80. At the end of the second semester of dissertation writing, and before May 15, a dissertation progress review replaces the annual student evaluation. The candidate distributes the work-in-progress to the chair of 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 written dissertation Progress Review Report.

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

Submitting the Dissertation for Final Review

82. The due date for submission of the dissertation for a final review to the chair of the dissertation board is January 31 in year six of full-time residence. Along with the dissertation, the candidate submits an abstract of about 400 words in length.

Approving the Dissertation for the Dissertation Colloquium

83. The reader(s) on the dissertation board review(s) the dissertation for its academic soundness and communicate(s) any observations about the dissertation to the dissertation co-directors by
March 1. In turn, the co-directors communicate any necessary changes to the text of the dissertation to the candidate. The candidate has three weeks to correct and revise the dissertation in light of this written and oral feedback.

84. By March 31, 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.

85. 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

Colloquium Outcomes (see section 5.3)

Qualifying for the Dissertation Colloquium

86. 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.

Dissertation Colloquium Registration

87. Full-time candidates register for the colloquium no later than the first week of their twelfth semester in residence.

Dissertation Colloquium Date

88. Normally, the colloquium is held on the second Friday of 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.

Dissertation Colloquium Procedure

89. 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. All in attendance receive a copy of the abstract of the proposal.

90. All faculty from the student’s two areas and all current doctoral students attend the colloquium. All other faculty and students of the Graduate Program in Theology are invited.

91. 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.
92. After the colloquium, the board votes on the suitability of the candidate for receiving the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theology.

**Passing the Dissertation Colloquium**

93. The dissertation board either passes 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.

94. 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 (or another person appointed by the dissertation board) will supervise the revision process and certify that any required revisions have been made adequately.

95. 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

**Admission of Applicants with Bachelor’s Degrees**

96. 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.

**Admission of Applicants with Graduate Credit Work from Other Institutions**

97. 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 (see the relevant Office of Graduate Studies policy): 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.
e) the grade for the course in question (a grade B+ or better is required for transfer of credits).
Given the above criteria, students who do not hold a graduate degree in Theology from Villanova University may be credited with up to 18 credit hours for course work 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) Transfer credits may not be used to satisfy any “Foundation” course work in any of the four areas of specialization.

b) Up to 6 credit hours of transfer credits may be applied to any one of the student’s area of specialization.

Students who receive credit for:

c) 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).

d) 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 24 credit hours of course work at Villanova (note: the Villanova M.A. is a 30 credit hours degree).

**Admission to Area Combinations**

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.

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.

**Studying Full-time or Part-time**

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 also admit a limited number of students without funding who may study on a part-time basis.

**Application Deadline**

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

103. 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.

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 of not more than 2000 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

104. Full-time 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.

105. Part-time 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

106. The doctoral program co-director for programming acts as primary academic adviser of all doctoral students.

7.4 Residence

107. 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 or the twelfth semester of residence, whichever comes first. Students are considered registered when they are enrolled in a minimum of one course, including the course in dissertation writing.

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

7.5 Leave of Absence

109. 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 Extra-Departmental Credits

110. Subject to the approval of the adviser, students may take courses in other Villanova graduate programs or in programs at other universities that might reasonably replace courses at Villanova.

111. Ordinarily, external courses are limited to one per semester. Foundation courses remain required of all students and may be replaced only with the approval of the adviser.

112. 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

113. 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.

114. 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

115. 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.

116. It also is Program policy that students use gender inclusive language to refer to human beings and God, especially in their written assignments.

7.9 Incomplete Grades

117. 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.

118. 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.
119. ‘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.

120. 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.

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

7.10 Student Evaluation

122. 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 spring semester, all students submit a self-assessment narrative to the adviser. The narrative describes the student’s perception of their academic progress regarding courses taken, relevant professional development, and plans for the next steps in the program.

123. At the end of every semester, each member of the doctoral faculty completes an evaluation for every student with whom they have worked during that semester (in particular, as instructor, dissertation co-director, teaching mentor), and submits it to the adviser. The adviser prepares a written progress report for each student based on faculty and student self-evaluations and presents it to the Personnel and Finance Committee for consideration. The Committee may make additional recommendations to the adviser who then sends the progress report to each student. The purpose of the evaluation is to provide detailed feedback on the student’s progress toward degree completion.

7.11 Academic Good Standing

124. 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

125. 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.

126. 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

127. 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.

Assistantships

128. 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 Committee for Admissions.

Assistantships and Good Standing

129. 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.

Duties of Assistants

130. 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.

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

Supplementary Funding

132. In addition to the support provided by the Office of Graduate Studies, the Graduate Program makes other types of financial support available:

a) Travel grants to help underwrite expense for attending conferences to present papers, network with colleagues, and interview for jobs after two semesters in residence;

b) Grants for archival or related research after semester eight in residence.

Summer Research Fellowships

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

134. 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.

Eligibility for Funding Beyond Six Years

135. Assistantship recipients are not eligible for continued tuition funding, stipends, and travel support beyond their sixth year of residence.

Employment

136. No assistantship recipient may hold a job, on or off campus, without the express written permission of the adviser and the Dean of Graduate Studies.

External Sources of Funding

137. 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