

UNION
2021 - 2022

Doctor of Philosophy

Academic Handbook

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MISSION STATEMENT

Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York is a seminary and a graduate school of theology established in 1836 by founders “deeply impressed by the claims of the world upon the church.” Union prepares women and men for committed lives of service to the church, academy, and society. A Union education develops practices of mind and body that foster intellectual and academic excellence, social justice, and compassionate wisdom. Grounded in the Christian tradition and responsive to the needs of God’s creation, Union’s graduates make a difference wherever they serve.

CORE VALUES

Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York, founded in 1836, is a historically progressive Christian seminary with increasing commitment to interreligious engagement and spirituality. Our mission is encapsulated by the phrase: “where faith and scholarship meet to reimagine the work of justice.” This quest for justice is broad and includes social justice and activism, responsive care for communities and individuals, the pursuit of collective well-being, and of human and planetary flourishing. In particular, exploring the religious and spiritual dimensions of this quest defines our distinctive mission.

These commitments have allowed defining of “core values” that express this mission and guide our teaching and learning. They are what we aim to teach our students:

- To grasp the substance of the Christian tradition and the other primary traditions of students through the study of scripture/sacred texts, theology, history, and tradition-specific practices
- To be in continued dialogue with other religious traditions on those traditions’ own terms and to dialogue with the spiritually non-affiliated with respect and care
- To develop the ability to theologically engage the human quest for meaning and spiritual connection
- To develop the capacity for self-reflection as well as the capacity to respond to others in ways that are compassionate and open-hearted
- To develop capacities for critical analysis of the ecological, social, and cultural systems in which persons, communities, and traditions exist, recognizing that spiritual and religious beliefs and practices are expressed in ways determined by conditions of time and place
- To cultivate a theological understanding of the earth and its diverse ecosystems in a manner that fosters an informed commitment to planetary well-being and justice
- To form a secure base for both ethical decision-making and spiritual wisdom in service to the needs of the world
- To educate impassioned, informed, and wise leaders and community members capable of engaging the pressing issues of our day with integrity and courage

Developed and approved by the faculty in academic year 2019-2020

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

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

1.1. Fields

- Bible: Hebrew Bible, New Testament, Cross Testament
- Church History/Historical Studies

- Philosophy of Religion, Social Ethics, Theological Studies
- Interreligious Engagement
- Practical Theology: Worship, Preaching, and Arts, Psychology and Religion, Religion and Education, Religion and Society

Associated course subject codes to the above fields is as follows:

Bible/Sacred Texts: Cross-Testament (BX), Hebrew Bible (HB), New Testament (NT), Sacred Texts (STX)

Church History/Historical Studies: Church History/Historical Studies (CH), Denominational Studies (DS)

Interreligious Engagement: Interreligious Engagement (IE)

Practical Theology: Communication Arts (CA), Worship, Preaching, and Arts (CW), Integrative and Field-Based Education (FE), Psychology and Religion (PS), Practical Theology (PT), Religion and Education (RE), Religion and Society (RS)

Theology and Ethics: Philosophy of Religion (PR), Social Ethics (SE), Theological Studies (TS)

1.2. Interdisciplinary Study

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

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

1.3. Goals and Outcomes

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

GOAL I:

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

Outcomes:

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

GOAL II:

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

Outcomes:

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

GOAL III:

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

Outcomes:

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

GOAL IV:

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

Outcomes:

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

GOAL V:

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

Outcome:

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

1.4. Faculty and Administration Authorship

The description of the PhD program that follows, with its procedures, policies and protocols, is authored by the faculty of Union Theological Seminary. A majority vote of the full-time faculty of the Seminary is needed for major revisions. The Director of the program assists the Academic Dean in overseeing the administration of the program. The PhD Program Committee resolves appeals and problems that may arise within the program and consists of two full-time professors, the Academic Dean and the Director of the program. The Doctoral Admissions Committee assists in selecting students for admission into the program.

STUDENT PROGRESSION

2.1. Major and Minor Concentration

Applicants to the PhD program identify and describe the rationale for their choice of the major field of specialization. If they have a sense of a minor field they are encouraged to describe that as well.

According to the major-minor structure, they will usually have two advisors, pursue course work and comprehensive exams in both areas, and write a dissertation in one area in a way that integrates the other into the research. Students are expected to master the subject matter that will qualify them for doing research and teaching on the graduate level in their major and undergraduate teaching in their minor.

2.2. Program Planning and Advising

First-year doctoral students are required to have a program planning conference in person with their primary advisor prior to course registration for the Fall semester. This conference frames an overall vision of the program, review the student's preparation for the program, and outlines a course of study (see also Appendix). If any aspect of the student's educational preparation for the doctoral program at Union so warrants, the advisor conducting the conference may recommend or stipulate remedial courses.

Thereafter, the students meet with their advisors at least once each semester. This meeting is an occasion for students to assess their progress in course work and language acquisition. This is also an opportunity to raise any personal matters that may significantly affect their studies and to discuss their calendar for completing the program.

If at the end of a given semester, a student has not met the expected timeline of the program, the advisor will indicate to the Director of the program, the Academic Dean and the Registrar that the student has met the conditions to be placed on warning (see below).

2.3. Residency Requirements and Extended Residence

Students admitted to the doctoral program should pursue advanced study for two academic years of residency (coursework) at the Seminary, while working under the advisement of their primary and secondary advisor.

Union's Master of Sacred Theology (STM) program offers advanced-level coursework designed to prepare students to "study more deeply a theologically related discipline, often in preparation for doctoral studies" (ATS Standard 4.12), therefore, graduates may apply up to half of the required PhD credits towards the minimum for the degree. Such credits should be directly relevant to the student's major or minor concentration decided with the advisor(s) in the Program Planning Conference.

After completing the residency requirements, PhD students must register for Extended Residence (UT 400) every semester they are active in the program. A reduced Extended Residence tuition is paid.

2.4. Course Credits

Students complete forty-three (43) credits in coursework. Ordinarily the coursework is divided between the major and minor as follows: Nine (9) courses in the major (twenty-seven (27) credits); Four (4) courses in the minor (twelve (12) credits); four (4) semester-long doctoral seminars (UT 550 and UT 551) valued at one credit per semester for a total of four (4) credits. The ratio between major-minor courses of nine (9) to four (4) may be adjusted in consultation with the advisors in either direction for reasons that are particular to each student and his or her project, provided that the purposes of having a major and minor are served.

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

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

2.5. Doctoral Seminar

The Doctoral Seminar, UT 550 in Fall and UT 551 in Spring, taken by PhD students in their first two years of study (but also open to other PhD students), helps to integrate students into a community of learning that binds them together across different fields of specialization. Typically, the doctoral seminar meets

for two hours, six times a semester for a total of two (2) points per academic year. The Director of the program coordinates the leadership of the seminar.

2.6. Language Examinations

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

Other modern languages may be substituted for Spanish, German or French if the student and his/her advisors make the argument that they are more useful for the student's scholarly research (to be approved by the program Director and the Academic Dean). Students with a native language other than English may request to waive **one** of the two modern language requirements with submission of [this form](#). Students are encouraged to acquire knowledge of these modern languages before entering the program. Students who have not done so may meet the language requirement by passing an examination administered by Union on dates stated in the academic calendar.

The timing of this requirement does not apply to classical languages such as Hebrew, Greek, or Latin that are required for certain individual programs. Regarding specific language needs of Candidates in Hebrew Bible/Old Testament and Early Church History, see above.

2.7. Workshops and Social Gatherings

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

2.8. Comprehensive Examinations

The functions of the comprehensive exams (comps) are:

1. to ensure broad knowledge of the major field of specialization and competency in the minor field of concentration
2. to test the student's academic skills in research and writing
3. to provide knowledge and resources that inform the student's dissertation topic and proposal

Comprehensive exams are graded pass/fail.

The student initiates the planning of the Comps Prospectus with the advisor. Preparation of the Comps Prospectus moves through stages of design, lining up the professors who serve as readers, presentation to and approval by the field, reporting the approval in writing to the Director of the program, and uploading to the student's ePortfolio (see above).

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

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

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

- A. Three (3) comprehensive exams in the major field; one (1) comprehensive exam in the minor field
- B. Two (2) exams in the major field; one (1) exam in the minor field; one (1) exam that combines the major and minor fields

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

2.9. Master of Philosophy

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

2.10. Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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

2.11. Dissertation Proposal

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

2.12. Dissertation

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

2.13. Dissertation Defense

When the advisor(s), in consultation with the student, agree that the dissertation is ready for defense, they contact the members of the dissertation committee and determine the date. Ordinarily, the student's primary advisor, two other faculty members, and one professor from another graduate school or theological faculty constitute the examining committee or board. The student should prepare a copy

of the dissertation for each member of the committee. The members of the examining board should have the completed dissertation in their hands at least three weeks prior to the defense.

The dissertation defense must take place at least three weeks prior to Commencement. The dissertation defense must be passed and the dissertation fully completed, received by ProQuest, and a [Dissertation Defense](#) form (see also Appendix F) submitted one full week prior to graduation in order to participate in the ceremony. It is important that the steps for electronic submission of the dissertation be calculated in scheduling the defense and the possible recommendations for revision by the examining board.

2.14. Submission of Dissertation to the Library

After the dissertation is successfully defended, the final copies of the dissertation are submitted electronically to the ProQuest dissertation and thesis database. This is a requirement for the degree program. At least a month prior to the submission deadline, students should meet with the Head of the Burke Library to discuss the ProQuest submission form, copyright, trends in scholarly communication and other ways to disseminate your research (e.g., institutional repositories). Librarians receive specialized training in these fields and are valuable partners in the dissertation writing process.

Students should prepare their dissertations for deposit to ProQuest by saving them as a PDF, and use a citation style approved by his or her advisor (Chicago, SBL, APA, etc.). Should questions arise about citations or style guides, the Burke Library staff can assist. After meeting with the library director, students should create an account on the ProQuest submission website. An email is sent to the student confirming that an account has been created. This should be done well before the dissertation is due.

After a student's committee has approved a dissertation and before the submission deadline, the student should go to ProQuest's ETD website <http://www.etdadmin.com/>, complete a submission form and submit a PDF of the dissertation. The assistant dean for academic administration receives notification of the deposit and confirms submission. No diploma is issued until this submission process is completed. Students may also submit their dissertations to Academic Commons, Columbia University's institutional repository.

2.15. Completion of the Program

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

2.16. Assessment

Assessment of student learning and progress through the program is a continuous and integral part of the doctoral program from inception to completion. Students regularly maintain ePortfolios (see also Appendix H) that provide direct (performance-based) and indirect (perception-based) evidence of their learning and academic success as well as their progress through the stages and requirements of the program. The ePortfolios contain the student's admission essay, program plan, the yearly transcript, yearly *Student Self-Assessment* (see also Appendix B), yearly *Advisor Assessment* (see also Appendix C), a substantial paper written each year, the comps prospectus, evaluations of teaching fellowships, evaluations of the comprehensive exams, and the dissertation prospectus.

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

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

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

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

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

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

3.1. Advisors

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

3.2. Program Planning Conference

In the first semester of residency the advisors of each new student have a conference with their advisee(s) to frame an overall vision of the student's program, review the student's preparation for it, and outline a course of studies in a PhD program plan to submit with [this form](#) (see also Appendix A). If any aspect of the student's educational preparation for the doctoral program at Union so warrants, the faculty members conducting the conference may recommend or stipulate remedial courses. Such a

stipulation must be put in writing and be part of the PhD program plan. This Conference should decide how the two advisors cooperate in the advising of the student.

3.3. Yearly Assessment

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

If an advisor believes that a student is not in good academic standing or is concerned with a lack of progress or achievement, the advisor should note the student's lack of progress in the *Advisor's Assessment Review* (see below). The advisor should indicate whether or not the student should be placed on warning, pending review by the Committee on Standing or the PhD Committee (as applicable – see appropriate section below).

3.4. Comprehensive Examinations

Advisors of students oversee their comprehensive examinations. Comprehensive examinations (comps) have three main functions:

1. to ensure a broad knowledge of the field
2. to test the essential academic skills of the prospective scholar
3. to funnel a student's knowledge toward the definition of a dissertation topic and a familiarity with the material that feeds into the development of a dissertation proposal

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

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

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

There are two modes of administering the comprehensive exams:

- a) **Print:** The advisor deposits the exam to the Registrar, who then delivers the exam to the student. The student returns the completed exam to the Registrar. The Registrar distributes the exam to the First and Second Readers for evaluation. The two Readers have one month to grade the exam as Pass or Fail, and the First Reader returns the exams to the Registrar.
- b) **Electronically:** If the exam is delivered directly to the student electronically, a clearly designated copy is sent to the Registrar, who in turn sends it to the first and second readers. The student returns the completed comprehensive exam electronically to the First and Second readers in the required time. The First Reader sends the examination to the Registrar.

In both cases, the First Reader consults the Second Reader for their grade (Pass or Fail) and evaluation, completes the [Comprehensive Exam Form](#) (see also Appendix D) and submits it **within one week** to the Registrar and program Director, with copies for the student and the advisor. The evaluation of the First Reader should clearly note the relevant identifiers of the exam. If the student has not passed, the specific grounds for failure should be clearly stated.

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

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

When the student has passed a comprehensive examination, the first reader is to complete the [Comprehensive Exam Form](#) (see also Appendix D) and submit **within one week** to the Registrar and program Director, with copies for the student and the advisor.

3.5. Change of Primary Advisor

In the event of a faculty member's departure from the Seminary (e.g., retirement, acceptance of another appointment) or his or her withdrawal of support for a student, the Field, after consultation with that faculty member, recommends to the Director of the program and the Academic Dean arrangements for his or her student(s). The Dean, however, is not bound by the field's recommendation. Students may also petition the Director of the program for a change of advisor. The petition should include, a) the reasons for making the change, and b) the name of the faculty member who has expressed his or her availability to assume the position. The program Director consults with the PhD

Program Committee and recommends that the Dean appoint another faculty member as advisor, in consultation with the student and the new advisor.

3.6. PhD Program Committee

The Academic Dean, in consultation with the Director of the program, appoints a PhD Program Committee for situations that require review of program policies and procedures, and issues pertaining to any students' failure to maintain good academic standing (see appropriate section below) after completion of coursework. This committee is composed of the program Director and at least two faculty appointed by the Academic Dean. The Dean and Assistant Dean also serve on the committee ex officio. The role of the committee is to resolve appeals and problems that may arise within the program.

3.7. Doctoral Admissions Committee

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

Members

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

Procedures

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

Timeline

The deadline for applications is **January 1** of the year of entry. Faculty members should read the folders during the month of January, and candidates for each field should be decided during the first field meeting of the semester or by the second week of February. The member of the Doctoral Admissions Committee selected by each field should read the folders of the applicants short-listed by the other fields in mid-February, as the Committee meets during the fourth week of February to make the decision on applicants following a general faculty discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the candidates short-listed by each field.

3.8. Teaching Fellow/Class Assistant/Research Assistant

Teaching Fellow

The rationale for teaching fellowships is primarily pedagogical, i.e. to support our PhD students in gaining training and experience in teaching. The assignment of teaching fellows (TF) should be congruent with the pedagogical content and methods of individual faculty members' courses. Budgetary

realities and realities of availability of TF's for courses and a fair distribution of TF's among faculty members are also factors that must be considered.

Eligibility of PhD Students:

A PhD student is eligible to accept a teaching fellowship upon the following:

1. The student's advisor in consultation with the student must assess and approve the student's pedagogical readiness and availability in relation to other work and progress in the PhD program overall.
2. Every TF must register for and participate in RE 504 *Theology and the Educational Process* course, normally before or during the first year they serve as a TF. RE 504 will be offered every fall, and is required in addition to the PhD seminar (UT 550 & UT 551).

Faculty Request for Teaching Fellow:

Should occur in the semester prior to, but no later than the first week of the semester the course is taught, following this sequence:

1. Approach the student to inquire about interest and availability, and negotiate an appropriate job description. If the student agrees...
2. The student arranges a meeting with their advisor to initiate the advisor-student consultation as described above. If the advisor agrees...
3. The faculty member submits a request in writing to the Dean, including the course description and a job description for the TF. Teaching fellows can never be given final responsibility for grades, and faculty should be the only one to enter/submit official final grades; professors are expected to closely supervise the TF's participation in grading.

Professors cannot make any promises to students about TF appointments until this formal request has been approved.

- Upon approval by the Dean, the student must accept this appointment in writing (email is acceptable) to the Dean and the professor of the course.

Eligible Courses:

Courses should normally have a projected enrollment of twenty students or more to receive a TF. A second TF may be requested following the above process if enrollment reaches thirty-five or more. Requests for more than two TF's cannot normally be honored.

Compensation:

Teaching Fellows receive \$3,000 per course (\$1,500 salary + \$1,500 scholarship). The scholarship portion for this appointment is credited to the student's account at the Seminary when they register at the beginning of the semester of the appointment. The TF's salary is paid through the Seminary's bi-weekly payroll. The Business Office manages the payroll and salary checks are spread throughout the duration of the semester. First semester pay runs from September through December; second semester pay runs from February through May. Every TF's salary is subject to payroll deductions for taxes as required by the law. The student is responsible for filing a W-2 form with the appropriate office. **The student must initiate this before the beginning of the semester consulting the academic office budget coordinator to start the process**, who then notifies the financial aid office.

Conferences and Evaluation:

- A. Faculty should schedule regular conferences with their TF throughout the semester. A minimum of 3 meetings (once before classes begin, once approximately at midterm to assess progress, and prior to final grading for the course) should occur.
- B. Teaching fellowships are an important part of the student's overall vocational preparation, therefore faculty are expected to write a brief evaluation of the TF's performance. A *Teaching*

Fellow Teaching Evaluation (see also Appendix G) is (1) submitted to the Director of the program, (2) added to the student's e-portfolio, and (3) emailed to the Registrar for the permanent academic folder – no later than the start of the subsequent semester. This is considered evidence for the student's overall progress, but an official grade is not recorded. Faculty should also provide TF's with student feedback from the course evaluations, and should summarize this in their own evaluation.

If no Union PhD student is available as TF:

Full-time faculty may request an outside person with appropriate pedagogical experience and training in the field to be hired as a "Visiting Assistant Instructor." Once identified, follow the same approval process (see above). Compensation is \$3,000 per course.

Class Assistant

Class assistants (CA) are normally PhD students hired on an hourly basis to assist with clerical, technological, and other logistical work for a course. CA's have no role in teaching or evaluating students in the course, nor in performing personal duties for faculty members. The request process is the same as for TF's (see #2 above). Priority is given to requests for CA's for new courses or courses with heavy administrative needs.

Compensation:

CA's are paid on an hourly basis at \$15/hour, with timesheets submitted through the Seminary's bi-weekly payroll, and may work up to a maximum of \$1,000 per semester. **The student must initiate this before the beginning of the semester, consulting the academic office budget coordinator to start the process.**

Research Assistant

Research assistants (RA) are normally PhD students who can be assigned as allowed within each faculty member's contract. RA's have no role in teaching or evaluating students in a course, nor in performing personal duties for faculty members. The request process is the same as for TF's (see #2 above), minus submission of a course description. To ensure the fair distribution among faculty, a faculty member is not normally assigned more than one RA per semester.

Compensation:

RA's are paid on an hourly basis at \$20/hour, with timesheets submitted through the Seminary's bi-weekly payroll, and may work up to a maximum of \$1,500 per semester. **The student must initiate this before the beginning of the semester, consulting the academic office budget coordinator to start the process.**

ACADEMIC REVIEW

4.1. Good Academic Standing

Good academic standing is defined in a number of ways. Students are considered in good academic standing in the program as long as one of the following developments does not occur:

- a student has not received a course grade below Credit (CR) in any course in a given semester
- a student has not successfully completed all required coursework and fulfilled the requirements of two modern languages by the beginning of the fifth semester in residence
- comprehensive examinations have not been completed by fifteen months after a student has successfully completed all required coursework
- a dissertation proposal has not been approved by one year following awarding of the MPhil

4.2. Warning

For students still in coursework, good academic standing in the program is affected by deficient grades (grades below CR). Students who receive a grade of Marginal Credit (MC) or No Credit (NC) in one or more courses are subject to review by the Committee on Standing. View the complete Committee on Standing policy including criteria for Warning, Probation, and Dismissal.

For students who have completed coursework, when any of the other above eventualities occurs student status is reviewed by the PhD Program Committee (see appropriate above section) with possibility of being placed on warning for one semester. When the Committee places a student on warning, it must outline measurable, time-limited benchmarks for the student to complete in order to be restored to good academic standing.

Federal regulations require that Union Theological Seminary monitor the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) of degree-seeking students to determine their eligibility for federal financial aid programs. A student who fails to maintain SAP is first placed on financial warning. Students are expected to be familiar with, and understand, the full policy here: <https://utsnyc.edu/admissions/financial-aid/satisfactory-academic-progress/>.

4.3. Probation

If the student has **not** met the requirements to be removed from warning, and on the petition of the advisor within ten (10) days after the end of a semester on warning, accompanied by a rationale, the Committee on Standing, or the PhD Program Committee, as applicable, may allow a student to continue in the program for one more semester on probation following a semester of warning. Normally this additional semester in the program is not granted without evidence of sufficient progress being made towards remedying deficiencies, or unless extraordinary circumstances warrant an additional semester in the program (on probation). The relevant Committee must state measurable, time-limited benchmarks for removal of probation and restoration to good academic standing. Probation may be continued for one additional semester upon further appeal by the student's advisor. If satisfactory progress cannot be made during a second semester on Probation, the student is automatically dismissed from the program.

Based on federal requirements, students who fail to meet SAP for a second consecutive semester or reach the end of their maximum time of completion, are no longer eligible to receive federal financial aid and have their aid suspended. All students have the right to appeal the suspension of their financial aid. Students are expected to be familiar with, and understand, the full policy here: <https://utsnyc.edu/admissions/financial-aid/satisfactory-academic-progress/>.

4.4. Dismissal

A student who fails to meet stated benchmarks while on warning or probation is liable to dismissal from the PhD program upon review by the PhD Program Committee. Additionally, it is within the power of the Committee on Standing to dismiss a student, following a semester on probation. At the end of the probationary period, the Committee on Standing shall recommend either removal of probation, continued probation, or dismissal from the Seminary. Students are expected to review the full policy in the academic catalogue.

OTHER MATTERS

5.1. Housing

Doctoral students are eligible for five years of Seminary housing (two of which must be during Residency), with two one-year extensions for students who are making good progress in meeting degree requirements. In addition, under special circumstances, a student may apply for an additional one-year

extension at a higher rate. The Academic Dean, in conversation with the Director of Housing & Campus Services, makes this decision upon the recommendation of the program Director. This policy applies to new students and students currently living in Seminary housing.

The procedures for applying for an extension are as follows:

1. The basis for housing extensions is academic progress in the degree program. That is, it must be evident that the student requesting the extension has made reasonable progress in meeting degree requirements and further access to Seminary housing facilitates further progress.
2. The student must send a letter to the Director of Housing & Campus Services by March 1 that has been endorsed by the student's major advisor. Students must give their letters to faculty advisors by February 1 to obtain the necessary endorsements before the March 1 deadline. Housing extensions are normally considered only at the February field meetings.
3. The student's letter must give the reasons for requesting a housing extension and give complete details of the student's progress to date in meeting degree requirements and what requirements they intend to meet in the following year.
4. The Academic Dean, in conference with the Director of Housing & Campus Services, approves the request for an extension only if the faculty advisor or dissertation director and the field have endorsed the request on the basis of academic progress.
5. If for any reason the Academic Dean is unable to approve the request, the matter may be referred to the PhD Program Committee for review.
6. The Director of Housing & Campus Services informs students and faculty advisors of the outcome of extension requests no later than March 31.

5.2. Leave of Absence

The requirement to be enrolled in the Seminary continuously until graduation is normative. Students who are faced with extraordinary personal circumstances, however, should consult the rules and provisions for a leave of absence from the Seminary. View the complete policy in the academic catalog.

5.3. Dossier Service

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

APPENDIX A – PROGRAM PLAN
NOT FOR SUBMISSION – SEE FORMSTACK LINK

	Major Field of Study:	
Name of Student	Minor Field of Study:	

	Date of conference:	
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Name of Advisor: Major

Name of Advisor: Minor

Description of Program (Major and Minor):

Residency Reduction (Yes or No/Explanation):

Status of Language Acquisition (Language/Term):

Substitutions (Language/Term):

Courses in MAJOR	Term/Year	Courses in MAJOR	Term/Year
Courses in MINOR	Term/Year	Courses in MINOR	Term/Year
Submission Date:		Submitted by:	

List required and projected courses, generically or specifically, and when they will be taken:

APPENDIX B – SELF-ASSESSMENT
due annually by May 31
NOT FOR SUBMISSION – SEE FORMSTACK LINK

Name:

Field:

Year in the Program:

This survey asks you to assess your current degree of proficiency with regard to each of the competencies expected of graduates of the Union PhD program. Since you are not yet graduates, and since several competencies are the result of the whole program and/or particular phases of it, your response should be scaled in the following manner beginning with “not applicable:”

- Very high degree of ability, skill, or development (mastery level proficiency; demonstrates exemplary excellence in this competency)
- High degree of ability, skill, or development (advanced level; demonstrates more than basic proficiency but less than exemplary excellence in this competency)
- Moderate degree of ability, skill, or development (intermediate level; demonstrates basic proficiency in this competency, but requires more knowledge, skills, training, or experience)
- Minimal degree of ability, skill, or development (beginning level; demonstrates a need to improve knowledge, skills, training, or experience in order to achieve basic proficiency in this competency);
- Not applicable (has not yet had the learning opportunities sufficient to develop this competency).

You may briefly explain, qualify, or comment upon each answer in the space provided. Please identify any document in your ePortfolio, or any course evaluation, that evidences your competency with regard to the learning outcome being assessed.

The submission deadline is May 31. The administrative assistant will insert it into your ePortfolio. Your advisor will review and submit her/his assessment by September 30 when it will be uploaded into your ePortfolio.

During the months of April/May of the academic year each student, up to the time that she or he has had the Dissertation proposal approved, is expected to add to the ePortfolio the following documents:

1. This yearly Self-Assessment
2. One academic paper completed during the past academic year
3. A report on languages if they have not been completed and noted on your transcript

A hold is placed on the student’s stipend if materials not inserted into the ePortfolio by May 31.

1. Advanced knowledge of the major area of study

	Not applicable	Minimal Degree	Moderate Degree	High Degree	Very High Degree
Current Degree of Proficiency:					

Comment/Evidence: *[Consider the transcripts of the student and the evaluations of courses.]*

2. Capacity to do original research and writing that is appropriate to the field

	Not applicable	Minimal Degree	Moderate Degree	High Degree	Very High Degree
Current Degree of Proficiency:					

Comment/Evidence: *[Consider papers in the student's ePortfolio and the comments of the professor.]*

3. Ability to teach effectively at the graduate and undergraduate level

	Not applicable	Minimal Degree	Moderate Degree	High Degree	Very High Degree
Current Degree of Proficiency:					

Comment/Evidence: *[If applicable, consider the reports of the teaching mentor in the ePortfolio.]*

4. Ability to engage critically in interdisciplinary discourse

	Not applicable	Minimal Degree	Moderate Degree	High Degree	Very High Degree
Current Degree of Proficiency:					

Comment/Evidence: *[Consider the grade and evaluation of the Doctoral Seminar.]*

5. Advanced knowledge of contents and methods in the minor field

	Not applicable	Minimal Degree	Moderate Degree	High Degree	Very High Degree
Current Degree of Proficiency:					

Comment/Evidence: *[Consider course evaluations.]*

APPENDIX C – ADVISOR ASSESSMENT

due annually by September 30

NOT FOR SUBMISSION – SEE FORMSTACK LINK

This form is part of the yearly assessment of the PhD student as they move through the program. It is based on the student’s ePortfolio that is to be completed by the end of May each year prior to the approval of his or her dissertation prospectus. The advisor/dissertation director is asked once a year to read the student’s degree audit, self-assessment and other supporting documentation from the ePortfolio and then comment on the student’s progress with the conclusion that they should continue in the program unconditionally, conditionally [with expectations that certain deficiencies will be remedied or deadlines met], or submitted to the review of the Doctoral Committee for a decision relative to continuance in the program.

Due **by September 30** at the latest. The administrative assistant then adds it to the student’s ePortfolio. Depending upon how the main advisor works with the advisor of the student’s minor concentration, the latter may be included in this evaluation and assessment, e.g., by delegation, or consultation, or an additional comment.

Your assessment should be scaled in the following manner beginning with “not applicable:”

- Very high degree of ability, skill, or development (mastery level proficiency; demonstrates exemplary excellence in this competency)
- High degree of ability, skill, or development (advanced level; demonstrates more than basic proficiency but less than exemplary excellence in this competency)
- Moderate degree of ability, skill, or development (intermediate level; demonstrates basic proficiency in this competency, but requires more knowledge, skills, training, or experience)
- Minimal degree of ability, skill, or development (beginning level; demonstrates a need to improve knowledge, skills, training, or experience in order to achieve basic proficiency in this competency)
- Not applicable (has not yet had the learning opportunities sufficient to develop this competency).

Advisor’s Assessment of Student Learning

Please assess the student’s current degree of proficiency with regard to the following learning outcomes expected of graduates of the PhD program.

1. Advanced knowledge of the major area of study.

	Not applicable	Minimal Degree	Moderate Degree	High Degree	Very High Degree
Current Degree of Proficiency:					

Comment/Evidence: *[Consider the transcript of the student, the evaluations of courses, and papers.]*

2. Capacity to do original research and writing that is appropriate to the field.

	Not applicable	Minimal Degree	Moderate Degree	High Degree	Very High Degree
Current Degree of Proficiency:					

Comment/Evidence: *[Consider the transcript of the student, the evaluations of courses, and papers.]*

--

3. Ability to teach effectively at the graduate and undergraduate level

	Not applicable	Minimal Degree	Moderate Degree	High Degree	Very High Degree
Current Degree of Proficiency:					

Comment/Evidence: *[If applicable, consider the reports of the teaching mentor in the ePortfolio.]*

--

4. Ability to engage critically in interdisciplinary discourse

	Not applicable	Minimal Degree	Moderate Degree	High Degree	Very High Degree
Current Degree of Proficiency:					

Comment/Evidence: *[Consider the grade and evaluation of the Doctoral Seminar.]*

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5. Advanced knowledge of contents and methods in the minor field

	Not applicable	Minimal Degree	Moderate Degree	High Degree	Very High Degree
Current Degree of Proficiency:					

Comment/Evidence: *[Consider course evaluations.]*

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Advisor’s Comments on Student’s Overall Progress in the Program:

Advisor’s Recommendation:

- Unconditional continuance recommended
- Conditional continuance recommended (see comments above)
- Submission to PhD Program Committee Recommended

Advisor’s Signature _____
(typed)

Date: _____

Program Director’s Comments:

Signature: _____
(typed)

Date: _____

APPENDIX D – COMPREHENSIVE EXAM REPORT

due within one week of exam

NOT FOR SUBMISSION – SEE FORMSTACK LINK

Student's Name	
Fields of Study (Major & Minor)	
Comp Number (#1, #2, #3 or #4)	
Area of this Comprehensive exam (mark "X")	<input type="checkbox"/> Major Area <input type="checkbox"/> Minor Area <input type="checkbox"/> Combination of Major and Minor ¹
Type of Comp (Closed Book, Open Book, Scholarly Paper, Presentation, etc.)	
Date of Comprehensive exam	
Subject of the Exam	
First Reader's Name	
Second Reader's Name	
Pass or Fail	
Comments	

Date:

Submitted by:

¹ Two possible options:

Option A: 3 Comps in the major area; 1 Comp in the minor area;

Option B: 2 Comps in the major area; 1 Comp in the minor area; 1 Comp that combines the major and minor areas (cf. PhD Handbook, p. 15).

APPENDIX E – DISSERTATION PROPOSAL
to be submitted within one week of approval
NOT FOR SUBMISSION – SEE FORMSTACK LINK

Candidate:

Dissertation Title:

Date of Proposal Conference:

Comments:

Members of the Examining Committee:

Primary adviser:	
Examiner:	

Date: _____ Submitted by: _____

APPENDIX F – DISSERTATION DEFENSE
due within one week of defense
NOT FOR SUBMISSION – SEE FORMSTACK LINK

Candidate: _____

Examiners: _____

Date/Location: _____

Title: _____

Decision:

_____ Accepted

_____ Accepted, minor revisions

_____ Accepted, major revisions

_____ Rejected

Members of the Examining Committee (signatures):

Primary Advisor

Candidate deposits two perfect copies of the dissertation (printed on 100% rag-content white paper) to the registrar at least one week prior to Commencement.

APPENDIX G – TEACHING FELLOW EVALUATION

due each semester as applicable

NOT FOR SUBMISSION – SEE FORMSTACK LINK

Please write a statement below that summarized the competencies that the student has achieved in the course of being a teaching fellow.

Teaching
Fellow:

Course number
and Title:

Semester/Year:

Your
Evaluation:

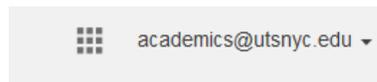
Date:

Signature of Professor (typed):

APPENDIX H – EPORTFOLIO ACCESS

Every Union student has an ePortfolio: a folder created by the academic office. That folder lives in the student's Google drive associated with their @utsnyc.edu email address (not the Drive connected to a personal Gmail account). If you cannot access your ePortfolio after following these instructions, contact Chris McFadden at cmcfadden@utsnyc.edu or email academics@utsnyc.edu for assistance.

To access your Google drive, go to your utsnyc.edu email inbox. In the upper-right corner of the screen there is an icon of nine small squares. Hover your mouse over the icon to see "Google Apps."

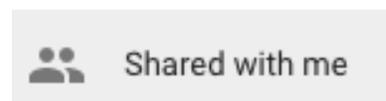


Select the "Google Apps" icon. A menu of apps will appear including the Google drive icon:



Select the drive icon. Your list of Google drive folders is displayed.

On the left of the screen, select the folder named "Shared with me."



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

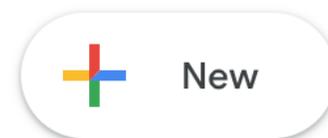
[Your degree] ePortfolio - (2017) LastName, FirstName - ab1234

(your entering year) your name
- your UNI)

Select the ePortfolio folder to open the contents of your ePortfolio.

How to Upload a Document to Your ePortfolio:

Select your ePortfolio to open it. In the upper-left corner of the screen, find the "NEW" button. Select "NEW" then "File upload" from the drop-down menu. Browse for and select your file. In a few moments, an upload status box will say "1 upload complete" and you're done! Your uploaded file will be shared automatically with the Assessment team. You can also click and drag documents into Google drive folders.



Follow this **Naming Convention** for academic work files uploaded to the ePortfolio:

Last Name First Name Course # Instructor Name Genre/title

(example): *Mirando Nicole NT101 Niang Exegetical Paper (or Revelation Paper)*

Other Device Usage:

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

APPENDIX I – EPORTFOLIO CHECKLIST

The follow items are to be deposited in each student’s ePortfolio:

- Admissions Essay – deposited by the academic office
- Program Plan – deposited by the student within one week after the program planning conference
- Self-Assessment – deposited annually by the student by May 31
- Advisor’s Assessment – deposited annually by the academic office due September 30
- Unofficial Transcript – deposited annually by the academic office due September 30
- At least one substantial paper written in the past year – deposited annually by the student by May 31
- Comps Prospectus – deposited by the academic office within one week of approval
- Teaching Fellow Evaluation – deposited by the academic office at the end of each semester
- Comprehensive Exam Report – deposited by the academic office within one week of exam
- Dissertation Proposal – deposited by the academic office within one week of approval
- Dissertation Defense – deposited by the academic office within one week of defense
- Current Curriculum Vitae – deposited annually by the student by May 31
- Request for Extension – deposited by the academic office within one week of approval