



THE
SOUTHERN BAPTIST
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

STUDENT MANUAL • RESEARCH DOCTORAL STUDIES

SBTS PhD Student Manual

2026–2027

PROGRAM

Doctor of Philosophy

ACADEMIC YEAR

2026–2027

ADMINISTERED BY

Research Doctoral Studies Office

STATUS

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This manual is a digest of current policies and procedures for the PhD program. For the answer to questions not answered in the manual, please contact Research Doctoral Studies (502-897-4119; email rds@sbts.edu).

Please note that official communication from the Research Doctoral Studies office will normally come via seminary email accounts. Professors and students are responsible for any information or instructions delivered through this means that may be pertinent to their program.

1 Program Overview

The Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) is the highest degree offered in North America. The purpose of the PhD program is to equip students in a confessional context for academic excellence and to prepare them to teach and research in their fields of study for the glory of God and the good of his church. The PhD program is administered by the Research Doctoral Studies office.

1.1 PhD Concentrations

The PhD can be earned in several different concentrations (major areas), which may have slight variations in requirements. Major areas include:

Biblical Counseling and Practical Theology*	Ethics and Public Theology
Biblical Spirituality	Evangelism*
Biblical Studies**	Historical and Theological Studies**
Biblical Theology	Leadership
Christian Apologetics	New Testament
Christian Missions*	Old Testament
Christian Philosophy	Philosophy and Theological Studies
Christian Preaching	Systematic Theology
Christian Worship	World Religions*
Church History & Historical Theology	

**These concentrations require four seminars in their major, 4 elective seminars, 4 colloquia in their major.*

***These concentrations require 8 sequenced seminars.*

1.2 Program Outlines

The PhD program has three phases, each with key student assessments and milestones. The Foundational Phase consists of 26 hours of coursework, typically completed in the first 12 months of a student's program. At the end of the Foundational Phase, students will be evaluated by their departmental faculty to determine their supervision assignment. Students who complete the Foundational Phase begin the Advanced Phase, which consists of a further 26 hours of coursework along with 2 hours of comprehensive exams and the preparation of a suitable dissertation prospectus. Upon successful completion of comprehensive exams, students enter the Candidate Phase, which consists of 18 hours including the approval of a dissertation prospectus, dissertation writing, and dissertation defense.

This course of study can be completed in four years if a student pursues full-time study. While students are not required to devote a specific amount of time to their studies, anything less than full-time study may significantly delay completion.

1.2.1 Residential/Modular Program Outline

FOUNDATIONAL PHASE

26 hours

Graduate Research Seminar	2 hours
Foundations for Theological Studies	2 hours
Higher Education	2 hours
4 Seminars	16 hours
2 Colloquia	2 hours
1 Research Language	2 hours

ADVANCED PHASE

26 hours

Course Development and Design	2 hours
4 Seminars	16 hours
2 Colloquia	2 hours
1 Research Language	2 hours
Prospectus Development 1–4	4 hours

PHD CANDIDATE PHASE

18 hours

Comprehensive Exams	2 hours
Dissertation Writing and Defense	16 hours

Total PhD Hours Required: 70 hours

1.2.2 PhD in Christian Studies (fully online) program outline

The fully online PhD in Christian Studies also has three phases with the same key assessments and milestones, but the phases are arranged differently to accommodate the synchronous online teaching modality. In the PhD in Christian Studies, the Foundational Phase consists of 52 hours of coursework, typically completed in the first 24 months of the program. At the end of the Foundational Phase, students will be evaluated by their departmental faculty to determine their supervision assignment. Students who complete the Foundational Phase begin preparation of a suitable dissertation prospectus. Upon approval of the faculty, successful completion of comprehensive exams, and approval of a dissertation prospectus, students enter the Candidate Phase, which consists of 18 hours of dissertation research and writing.

FOUNDATIONAL PHASE

52 hours

Graduate Research Seminar	2 hours
Foundations for Theological Studies	2 hours
8 Seminars	32 hours
2 Research Languages	4 hours
Prospectus Development 1–4	4 hours
Readings in Christian Studies	4 hours
Scholarship in Context	4 hours

PHD CANDIDATE PHASE

18 hours

Comprehensive Exams	2 hours
Dissertation Writing and Defense	16 hours

Total PhD Hours Required: 70 hours

2 Admissions and Matriculation

2.1 Admission Overview

2.1.1 Admission Prerequisites

The requirements for the PhD application include:

- At minimum, a sixty-hour MA degree in the relevant field.
 - For the PhD concentrations in Biblical Studies, New Testament, Old Testament, or Biblical Theology, the applicant must prove biblical language (Greek and Hebrew) competency in the following ways:
 - An entrance exam on Greek or Hebrew, depending on the desired concentration.
 - At least 12 master level credit hours in Greek or Hebrew, depending on the desired concentration.
 - For the PhD in Christian Studies, a Master of Arts (minimum 60 credit hours) with at least 12 hours in biblical studies and at least 12 hours in systematic theology and/or church history is acceptable.
- Academic writing sample/paper.
- Two academic letters of recommendation
- One pastoral letter of recommendation
- International applicants:
 - TOEFL, minimum score of 95.
 - WES transcript evaluation.

2.1.2 Application stages

The PhD application process has two stages.

During the first stage of the admission process, the student will complete the application which includes submission of the application, church/pastoral recommendation, academic recommendations, official transcripts, spiritual biography, and TOEFL scores/WES evaluation (if necessary). After the student has completed and submitted his or her application, the admissions team will complete an initial review of the application.

The second stage of the admissions process consists of a biblical language exam (if necessary). After the exam, the RDS office will review the applicant and make a final recommendation for admission. The RDS office and admissions team will then communicate the admissions decision to the student.

2.1.3 Application Deadlines

Applications are evaluated on a rolling basis, and students can expect a decision within four (4) weeks of the submission of all components of their application (including all exams). The deadline for application submission to matriculate in the spring semester is October 1, and to matriculate in the fall semester it is March 1.

Applications received after these dates will automatically be considered for matriculation in the next available semester.

2.2 Application Review Responsibilities

Students without qualifying applications may be recommended to other RDS programs.

2.3 Exam

Applicants to our PhD concentrations in New Testament, Old Testament, Biblical Studies, and Biblical Theology must take a biblical language exam as part of their application.

Linked below are two exams: one in Hebrew and the other in Greek. For applicants to the New Testament or Biblical Studies (New Testament) concentrations, you will take the Greek exam. For applicants to the Old Testament or Biblical Studies (Old Testament) concentrations, you will take the Hebrew exam. For Biblical Theology applicants, you will take both exams.

Instructions:

- You will have 1.5 hours to complete the exam. (For applicants to the Biblical Theology concentration, you will have 1.5 hours per exam, or a total of 3 hours).
- You will download and print the exam to complete it.
- You must have a proctor for the entirety of your exam. You will put the proctor's name and email address at the end of your exam.
- You must take the exam within 10 business days of receiving this email.
- You are allowed no aids during the exam (e.g., notes, lexicons, grammars, Bibles [English or original language], Google, Logos, etc.).
- Once you have secured a proctor and are ready to begin the exam, open a Word document or Google Doc and title it "Lastname.Firstname.Greek (or Hebrew) Exam." You will then open the appropriate exam attached to this email and begin your time.
- Once complete, you will convert the document to a PDF and upload it to your application portal.

We recommend opening the exams using a desktop or laptop. Mobile devices (phones, tablets, etc.) may not render the exam PDFs correctly.

2.4 Decisions

The RDS office will distribute decision letters to all applicants. Generally, decision letters will be issued within four weeks of complete application (including all exams).

2.5 Matriculation and Deferral of Matriculation

Upon acceptance, students submit a matriculation form to indicate their intention to begin the program. After matriculating, students should register for courses each semester (unless granted interrupted status) until a dissertation has been submitted and successfully defended or until withdrawn from the program. The maximum length of the PhD program is fourteen semesters (7 years).

Students who are unable to matriculate must request permission to defer enrollment by submitting a Deferral Form. The Deferral Form must be approved by the Assistant Director and Director of RDS. Deferral can be up to two semesters after which the student must reapply. Specific guidelines for deferrals include:

- Deferrals are granted on a case-by-case basis after RDS review. The deferral application must be received six weeks before the student is to begin coursework.
- Deferrals are for up to one year (two semesters).
- If a student cannot matriculate at the end of the one-year deferral, the student must then reapply for the program. The student will need to submit transcripts of any education done during the deferral. The student will need to provide a letter explaining the cause of the deferral and how they have been resolved.
- A student who is a member of a military reserve unit and whose studies must be deferred by a call to active duty must inform Academic Records of his or her call to active duty and the duration of the call. Students who defer due to military service will not be required to re-apply.
- International students residing in the United States on an F1 Visa must contact International Student Services prior to applying for deferral. Any time off from the program may affect F1 Visa status.

2.6 Decision Rationale

All questions regarding admission decisions should be directed to the RDS office. Neither faculty nor the RDS office shall divulge the reasons for denial.

2.7 Provisional Status

Some students may be assigned provisional status upon entrance into the PhD program if there is some question of the student's readiness for doctoral work, under the judgment of the faculty or RDS Director. A student who is admitted on provisional status receives close monitoring to ensure that he or she is progressing well in the program.

A student on provisional status who does not meet the expectations of the faculty may be dismissed from the program. These decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Director of RDS.

3 Coursework Information

Students should contact the RDS office for advising on course selection and registration. After a permanent supervisor is assigned at the beginning of the Advanced Phase, students should always consult their supervisor on questions related to program progress and should expect to meet with their supervisor at least twice per semester.

3.1 Registration

Students must register for at least one course (or apply for interrupted status) each semester for the duration of their degree program. Registration must be completed by the first week of the semester for both residential and modular students. Late registration will now carry a fee of \$250.

A typical semester for a student in the coursework stage will include two seminars, one colloquium, one research language, and other RDS general courses. Students may not take more than two seminars in any given fall/winter term or spring/summer term without prior written approval from their supervisor and the director of RDS.

Failure to register or apply for interrupted status for any semester prior to the completion of all degree requirements may be interpreted as withdrawal from the program. If a student fails to register for two semesters, he or she will be administratively withdrawn from the program.

ADDING COURSES

During online registration, schedule adjustments may be made without penalty. After the close of online registration, courses may only be added by exception. Applications for exception to this policy may be made through Academic Records and the RDS office and are subject to late registration fees. Again, late registration will now carry a fee of \$250.

DROPPING COURSES

Students may drop classes via my.sbts.edu until the third Monday of the fall or spring semester (including winter/summer courses). Classes dropped during this period do not appear on the transcript. Courses dropped after the drop period fall under the institution's withdrawal policy.

3.2 Cooperative Program Course

The cooperative program seminar is a one-time, non-curricular requirement for all students entering Southern or Boyce. The class must be completed by the end of a student's first year of study. Students will listen to a series of lectures and take corresponding quizzes scoring a final overall average of 80 percent or higher to pass the course. Students who do not complete the course by the end of their second semester of study will not be able to register for future classes until the requirement has been met.

3.3 RDS General Courses

Every PhD student must complete four RDS general courses during the coursework stage of the program: 81020 Graduate Research Seminar, 81260 Foundations for Theological Studies, 81270 Course Development and Design, and 81300 Higher Education. These courses are offered in May and December.

In their first year, students must take the Graduate Research Seminar (81020) and Foundations for Theological Studies (81260). GRS and FTS are an online, self-paced course. These two courses may be waived for students who have completed them in the SBTS ThM program.

After completing GRS and FTS, students must take both 81270 Course Development and Design and 81300 Higher Education in subsequent semesters.

Students in the Christian Studies concentration take GRS and FTS in their first two semesters. Instead of taking 81270 Course Development and Design and 81300 Higher Education, students in Christian Studies take 97030WW Scholarship in Context.

3.4 Seminars

All students must complete a total of eight seminars. For most concentrations, at least five seminars must be in the student's major area.

In addition to the seminars required by their major, students may also take up to three seminars in any area (within their major or outside it).

In rare cases, a student may be approved to major in two concentrations. The primary concentration consists of the normal requirements for one's PhD major: five seminars, four colloquia, Prospectus Development. For the second major, a student completes at least four area seminars and four area colloquia. Thus, a student with a double major will complete at least nine seminars and eight colloquia. Double majors must be approved by a student's supervisor and the RDS office. The dissertation for a double major will be written in the primary concentration area.

Note: A double major is not required to teach in a particular discipline. Rather, the regional accreditors in the United States recommend eighteen hours of doctoral coursework to qualify a candidate to teach at the graduate (i.e., Master's) level. Thus, if a student is primarily concerned with being qualified to teach a particular subject at the graduate level, the RDS office recommends taking sixteen hours of seminars and two colloquia in a second concentration. Note that the two colloquia in the second concentration are in addition to the required four primary-concentration colloquia.

3.5 Colloquia

In addition to seminars, students must complete a total of four colloquia within their major area. Colloquia are department-wide discussions of selected readings that do not require major research assignments.

The goal of the colloquium is to provide the highest quality and most beneficial educational experience for our PhD students by facilitating departmental interaction. This corresponds with two of the stated goals of the doctoral studies department: to pursue academic excellence and to foster relationally-driven learning communities. Colloquia achieve these goals in the following ways:

1) By providing ongoing opportunities for PhD students to interact with each other and with the professors in their departments. This iron-sharpening-iron collegiality is beneficial as students grow into being scholars and colleagues. Colloquia are an important part of the faculty's mentoring of students.

2) By guiding and directing students in reading which covers essential areas of knowledge in each department's field. Colloquia provide the opportunity to fill in gaps in students' knowledge in an interactive environment. In this way colloquia also play an important role in helping students to prepare for comprehensive exams.

3.6 Research Languages or Research Methodology Requirements

Students must complete their research language/methodology requirement before their comprehensive examinations. Students should consult with their advisors as to which approved research languages or methodology would best aid their dissertation research and writing. Courses for some of the most common research languages are offered in online format through SBTS.

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Students in the School of Theology can take two of the following pre-approved research languages: French, German, Spanish, Latin, Modern Hebrew, Dutch, or Arabic. Each of these is worth two hours. A student may choose to take a proficiency exam in one of these languages, which would satisfy two hours of the research language/methodology requirement.

BILLY GRAHAM SCHOOL

Students in the Billy Graham School can take two of the five following approved research languages: French, German, Spanish, Latin, Arabic. Each of these is worth two hours. A student may choose to take a proficiency exam in one of these languages, which would satisfy two hours of the research language/methodology requirement. The following exceptions should be taken into account:

- Christian Apologetics – Logic can count as one language.
- Biblical Counseling – Students can complete any combination of 2 research languages or complete the 4-hour class 96800 Empirical Research. Students should consult with their supervisor to determine the best language for their intended dissertation.
- Christian Missions and World Religions – Students in Christian Missions and World Religions have three options:
 - Option 1: students can take two of the approved research languages. Students may use a modern field language as one of the languages, per supervisor and RDS approval.
 - Option 2: with supervisor approval, students may take the Cultural Anthropology and Ethnographic Research seminar (86115) to fulfill their second research language requirement.
- Leadership and Christian Worship – These students ordinarily take 96800 Empirical Research.

3.7 Grading Policy

The minimum passing grade in any course taken in the PhD program is a B (3.0 on a 4.0 scale). A student who earns a grade lower than a B will lose credit for that course and will be placed on academic probation. Students who earn a grade lower than B in more than one course may be subject to dismissal.

It is essential that a student's performance is academically strong during a time of probation. Normally, probation will not extend beyond one semester.

The RDS Director will ask faculty who are acquainted with the student's work for an evaluation, and it will be determined whether the probationary status should be removed and the student allowed to continue in the program.

If a student receives an additional failing grade during the probationary period, it will result in dismissal from the program.

3.8 Prospectus Development

Prospectus Development I-IV (81220, 81221, 81222, 81223) is a four-course sequence that takes place during the Advanced Phase that helps to facilitate the supervisor's mentorship of the student and the development of a dissertation topic, culminating in a rough draft of the student's prospectus. In each installment, students will work with their supervisors to narrow the scope of their dissertation topic, develop a comprehensive bibliography of the relevant literature, and hone their research and writing. Prospectus Development courses are graded on a pass/fail basis.

4 Comprehensive Exams

Comprehensive exams ensure that students have a broad, working knowledge of their chosen field of study. Students receive a study guide prepared by the department to assist them in preparing for the exam.

Students can only take comprehensive exams after completing all other requirements for the PhD Foundational and Advanced Phases, with the exception of the second and third RDS general courses (Higher Education, Course Development and Design), which may be taken along with, or one semester after, comprehensive exams.

The procedure for comprehensive exams is as follows:

- In conjunction with the departments, the RDS office will maintain a list of questions that cover general doctoral-level knowledge of their field. The RDS office will retain these materials and use them on a rotating basis for examining the students. The department will also provide corresponding study guide materials to guide the students' preparation.
- Comprehensive exams will be administered by the RDS office twice per year at set dates.
- After receiving approval from the supervisor and RDS advisor, students who wish to take their comprehensive exams must register for the appropriate course at the beginning of the semester that corresponds to the set exam dates.
- Students will take three days of comprehensive exams corresponding to their major area.
 - From the questions provided by each department the RDS office will choose which exams to administer in any given semester. For certain areas of study there are specific requirements for students:
 - Old Testament—One of the three exams will be Hebrew-language based, with translation, grammatical, and syntactical analysis
 - New Testament—One of the three exams will be Greek-language based, with translation, grammatical, and syntactical analysis
- Once completed, comprehensive exams will be collected by the RDS office and distributed to faculty for grading. Each comprehensive exam shall be graded by two different professors.
- The grading of the exams will be done according to and recorded on the Comprehensive Exams Grading Rubric provided by the RDS office.
- In the case of a failing grade on any or all of the comprehensive exams, the RDS office will either:
 - Allow a retake of the entire failed exam, to be completed within four months of the original.
 - If a student successfully passes the exam on the second try then no further action is required. If a student fails the exam on the second try then they will be administratively withdrawn from the program.
 - Not allow a retake and the student will be administratively withdrawn from the program.

5 Dissertation

5.1 Prospectus And Style Reading

The initial stage of the dissertation process is the approval of a prospectus, which details the argument and structure of the dissertation. Students may submit a prospectus at any point after the completion of PhD coursework. However, most students will submit their prospectus after comprehensive exams. The prospectus must conform to the Prospectus Template provided by the Southern Seminary Writing Center. The due dates for the prospectus each semester will be posted in the 81910 course on Canvas.

A prospectus should include the following components and should be no more than twenty pages or 5000 words in length (not including front and back matter):

1. **Title Page**
2. **Text of prospectus (No more than twenty pages or 5000 words)**
 - a. **Thesis:** This section should include the research question as well as a clear thesis statement.
 - b. **Methodology:** This section should include a summary of the methods you will employ to advance your thesis.
 - c. **Survey of scholarly literature:** This section surveys the history of significant research previously completed by scholars in the field, showing the state of research prior to the proposed dissertation.
 - d. **Significance:** This section shows the significance of the research for the field of study, demonstrating the value of the proposed research.
 - e. **Argument:** This section is a detailed explanation in paragraph form of the argument to be made in the dissertation
 - f. **Timeline for completion:** A very short explanation of the time needed to complete the dissertation and the projected graduation date.
3. **Table of Contents:** The anticipated Table of Contents for the dissertation (1–4 pages).
4. **Bibliography:** Dissertation bibliography (10–15 pages). The bibliography should include all works necessary to establish the dissertation’s argument. Ordinarily, it should include two main sections: primary and secondary sources. Additional subdivisions may be appropriate.
 - a. **Primary Sources:** Works produced by the subjects of research, by those in dialogue with them, or by those relating to the subject’s relevant milieu.
 - b. **Secondary Sources:** Works produced by scholars relating to the subjects and their milieu.
5. **Back matter**
 - a. **Abstract (approximately 350 words; no more than 500 words)**
 - b. **Curriculum Vitae**

Students who are completing an empirically based dissertation should refer to the Research Evaluation Checklist and the Social Science Research Checklist in preparation for both prospectus and dissertation.

5.2 Prospectus Hearing

The prospectus hearing occurs once the supervisor determines the draft to be ready for assessment by the department faculty. At this point, students should contact their supervisors to schedule their hearing. The supervisor and department chair should attend. Other members of the department faculty or members of the student's dissertation committee who are in other departments may attend, but this is not required.

After making any required revisions, the student submits the final draft of the prospectus along with the other required material (check the Canvas course for 81910 Dissertation Research and Writing) to the RDS office via Canvas. The prospectus must be uploaded by the deadline provided on Canvas to be included in the next faculty report for final approval.

5.3 Prospectus Approval Process

The procedure for prospectus approval is as follows:

1. With the supervisor's verbal approval, the student presents the prospectus to department faculty.
2. After making any required or suggested revisions, the student submits the prospectus for a style reading a minimum of four weeks before the Canvas due date.
3. After receiving the style reading and making any required revisions, the student submits the final draft of the prospectus to RDS via the Canvas course for 81910 Dissertation Research and Writing by the deadline listed on Canvas.
4. The Assistant Director of Research Doctoral Studies reviews and approves the prospectus, then includes it for approval by the faculty at the final faculty meeting of the semester.

Note: Steps 1-3 must all be completed prior to the semester deadline for prospectus approval as listed on Canvas. Otherwise, the prospectus will not be approved until the following semester.

The student should continue to register for 81910 Dissertation Research and Writing every fall and spring for the remaining duration of their program.

5.4 Coursework Audit

Once a student has submitted a prospectus, the RDS office will perform a coursework audit, notifying the student of any outstanding courses to be completed. Once a student has successfully passed the coursework audit, the only requirement left for the student will be the dissertation.

Once the student completes all coursework requirements, passes comprehensive exams, receives approval of their prospectus from the committee and the Director of the RDS office, and finally, receives formal approval of the dissertation title from the faculty of the seminary, the student becomes a PhD candidate.

5.5 Dissertation

The length of a completed PhD dissertation must be between **50,000** and **80,000 words** (footnotes and appendices not included). Footnotes should not exceed 30,000 words. Appendices should rarely be included, but if they are necessary, the total word count in the appendices should not exceed 15,000.

Note: As a general rule, footnotes in the body of the text (outside the literature review in the introductory chapter) should not constitute more than 20 percent of a written page.

5.6 Dissertation Committee Selection

In preparation for the submission of the dissertation defense draft, the supervisor will, in consultation with the student, determine the committee members for the defense. The committee will consist of the supervisor and two qualified members of the institution's faculty. All committee selections are subject to review by the RDS office.

Each committee member is responsible for reading the dissertation before the defense hearing. Committee members will be given at least four weeks to read the dissertation.

5.7 Dissertation Submission Process

The dissertation defense draft submission procedure is listed below:

1. The supervisor and student together determine the dissertation committee (see above).
2. The student sends the defense draft to the supervisor for approval.
3. The supervisor contacts a potential external reader to confirm their interest in serving as a reader for the dissertation.
4. The student submits the dissertation to the RDS office by completing the steps below.
 - a. Uploading a PDF of the draft to the appropriate Canvas portal for 81910 Dissertation Writing and Defense.
 - b. Uploading the signed Defense Submission Form to Canvas. This form also indicates the external reader and confirms the reader has expressed interest in serving in this role.
 - c. This is the step that must be completed by the dissertation deadline each semester, September 1 for fall submissions and February 1 for spring submissions. See 5.9 below.
5. RDS office administrator distributes the dissertation draft to the committee.
6. The student submits a digital copy of the dissertation draft to the Style Reader.
7. The RDS office extends an official invitation to the external reader with a copy of the dissertation draft and the external reader report.
8. The RDS Administrative Assistant sends out an email to the committee to schedule a dissertation defense date. The defense will be scheduled at least four weeks after the draft is sent to the external reader, to allow time for the reader to review the draft and make comments.

5.8 External Reader

The external reader is an expert in the field who reviews the dissertation and offers feedback. External readers are required for concentrations with the School of Theology, but not required for concentrations within the Billy Graham School.

Supervisors will select an appropriate external reader in consultation with their student. Once the reader is selected, the *supervisor* should make an initial request with the potential external reader prior to the submission of the dissertation defense draft. If the external reader agrees to read the dissertation, then a formal request will be

sent from the Doctoral Studies office along with the dissertation defense draft and the external reader forms. External readers are given four weeks to return their comments. An external reader fee of \$500 will be charged to each student's account upon completion of the external reader's review.

The external reader evaluates the dissertation and returns the completed External Reader Report to the RDS office. Unlike SBTS committee members, an external reader does not have veto power. However, if an external reader fails a dissertation, but the SBTS committee members choose to evaluate it as passing, one committee member (not the student's supervisor) must submit to the RDS office a detailed report responding to the failing comments. Additional review may be required by the RDS office.

5.9 Defense Draft Deadlines

In order to allow sufficient time for a defense to be scheduled, the student is required to submit their dissertation in digital form to Canvas. (Step 4 in 5.7 above) by the defense draft submission due date (**September 1** for fall, **February 1** for spring). Dissertations are assessed using Turnitin upon submission. If the Turnitin report detects any issues of plagiarism or artificial intelligence use, students must address them before the draft can move forward to defense (see "Academic Integrity Statement").

5.10 Oral Defense and Defense Rubric

At the oral defense, students present and defend their dissertation before their committee.

The procedure for conducting the oral defense is as follows:

1. The RDS office will coordinate with committee members to schedule a suitable date for the oral defense (Note: Once a defense is scheduled, it must be held, regardless of the anticipated outcome).
2. The RDS office will reserve a room for the defense and provide the supervisor with the necessary oral defense evaluation documents. Faculty and students are required to attend the defense in person unless they receive specific approval from the RDS office. No one is permitted to attend the defense other than the student and his or her committee members.
3. The oral and written portions of the defense will be evaluated using the Dissertation Defense Rubric.
4. After the oral defense, supervisors should submit the completed oral defense evaluation documents to the RDS office.
5. Students must make any required revisions necessary for the completion of the final version of their dissertation.
6. The link for students to upload their final dissertation draft to the SBTS ProQuest database is found on the Canvas course or the SBTS PhD Dissertation Process page.

Dissertation Defense Rubric

	1 - Fail	2 - Pass w/ Revisions	3 - Pass	4 - Pass with Distinction
Critical and Productive Engagement <i>The student will be able to engage existing scholarship critically and productively.</i>	<i>The student has failed to make a contribution to the field of study that will be recognized by scholars as meaningful or significant.</i>	<i>The student has made a potential contribution to the field of study but some revision is needed to raise and ensure the quality.</i>	<i>The student has made a contribution to the field of study that will be recognized by scholars as meaningful.</i>	<i>The student has made a contribution to the field of study that will be recognized by scholars as very important.</i>
Quality of Research <i>The student will be able to plan and conduct research in the area of specialization. The student will be able to use standard research tools and methods in the chosen field.</i>	<i>The student has not conducted original research or fails to use standard tools and methods in the field.</i>	<i>The student has conducted original research but some revision is needed to raise the level to that required by the field.</i>	<i>The student has conducted sufficient original research using the standard tools and methods of study in his/her field.</i>	<i>The student's research exhibits unusual excellence in content and execution.</i>
Effective Communication of Results <i>The student will be able to communicate the results of his/her study clearly and effectively in both written and oral form.</i>	<i>The student has failed to communicate the results of his/her research clearly and effectively.</i>	<i>The student has communicated his/her research with some effectiveness but some revision and re-organization is needed to raise it to the appropriate level.</i>	<i>The student has communicated the results of his/her research with clarity and effectiveness.</i>	<i>The student has communicated the results of his/her research with exceptional clarity and eloquence.</i>

5.11 Defense Failure Policy

If a student is failed by the committee, the committee can recommend the following options.

1. The committee may require the student to take one semester to revise and re-defend the dissertation. (Students may request additional time with the approval of the committee and the RDS office.)
2. Otherwise, the committee may fail the dissertation with no opportunity for revision, in which case the student may be awarded a ThM.

5.12 Graduation

Students must complete the following requirements in order to graduate:

1. Complete all coursework.
2. Pass comprehensive exams.
3. Apply for graduation through the Academic Records office by completing the Graduation Application Form (available in the student's online account) by the posted deadline. This form will also require the student to

provide measurements for regalia to rent for the graduation ceremony. More details about graduation dates and requirements are available on the graduation information webpage: <https://inside.sbts.edu/academic-records-registrar/graduation/>

4. Complete all the dissertation steps including:

- a. SBTS PhD students must submit an electronic copy of their final dissertation or thesis formatted as a PDF to Proquest/UMI. This electronic copy will also be placed within the seminary's institutional repository. Details about electronic submission, creating PDFs, pricing and other information are available on Canvas.
- b. Participate in the Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED), which aggregates data about the educational history and future plans of doctoral graduates throughout the country. Students must fill out the online Survey of Earned Doctorates Questionnaire. After registering and completing the survey, students should choose to send the email confirmation of their questionnaire completion to rds@sbts.edu to notify the RDS office that they have fulfilled this requirement.

6 Other Program Details

6.1 Academic Integrity Policy

In light of changing technologies and resources, and in an effort to maintain the highest academic and ethical standards, the Office of Doctoral Studies has established the following practices to ensure the academic integrity of our doctoral programs. Failure to abide by this policy will result in disciplinary inquiry. The policy includes the following guidelines:

- According to the Academic Catalog, “Plagiarism is the use or theft of intellectual property without attribution. It is both a moral and educational transgression.”
- The Student Handbook clarifies, “Whatever the type of borrowing or the context of its use, the appropriated material should be attributed to its source. At the least, the name of the individual or source should be given with the material.”
- In accordance with this policy, students may not employ third-party research consultants, including executive summaries, for any portion of their academic degree including but not limited to coursework, seminar papers, comprehensive examination preparation, and prospectus/thesis/project/dissertation writing, with the exception of quantitative statistical analysis previously approved by a student’s supervisor.
- The use of generative Artificial Intelligence tools to produce writing of any kind, from initial outlines to final prose, whether verbatim or edited, is prohibited. This includes translating the student’s work into English, and applies to coursework, seminar papers, comprehensive examinations, prospectuses, theses, projects, and dissertations. Permitted and guarded uses, including the disclosure requirement, are set out in the RDS Artificial Intelligence Policy. Students must write their own original material for all stages of the degree.
- All proposals, prospectuses, culminating projects, theses, and dissertations must be accompanied by a signed copy of the following “Statement of Academic Integrity.”

“I, _____, hereby affirm that the following [project/thesis/dissertation] is comprised entirely of my own original research except where explicitly noted. To the best of my knowledge, this work does not contain nor was it produced using any unauthorized resources including but not limited to (1) unattributed published or unpublished material created by someone other than myself, (2) research compiled by a consultant, whether an individual or a group, or (3) any unattributed borrowing of ideas or their expression which the original creator might identify as personal intellectual property.”

6.2 Independent Studies

The PhD program allows both internal and external independent studies during the fall and spring semesters. With permission from the RDS office, students may take up to two independent studies during their program.

Students on academic probation are not eligible to take an independent study.

6.2.1 Internal Independent Study

An internal independent study is undertaken with an SBTS professor who will oversee the student in guided reading and writing on a specific topic. Students are allowed to take up to two independent study courses during their program. **Note: Professors who teach independent studies do not receive compensation.**

Students will be registered for the corresponding course in Canvas:

Division	Internal Code
Biblical Counseling	87877
Biblical Spirituality	88967
Church History	84467
Leadership	91577
Ethics	85967
Evangelism and Church Growth	88577
Missiology	86177
New Testament Studies	83877
Old Testament Studies	82877
Philosophy	85467
Preaching	86967
Theology	84877
World Religions	88177

6.2.2 External Independent Study

A student can take one external independent study by enrolling in a PhD level course at another institution or by contracting with a professor at another institution who will oversee the student in guided reading and writing on a specific topic.

The external study must contribute to the student's major field of specialization or be clearly relevant to the student's program of study. The student is responsible for all fees and for ensuring that an official transcript of coursework taken at other institutions is sent to the Academic Records office. The RDS office requires a contract fee of \$750 to compensate an external instructor. This fee will be billed to the student's account in addition to the program fee.

Upon completion of the course, the student is to submit a descriptive and evaluative report of the external study to the faculty supervisor.

Students will be registered for the corresponding course in Canvas:

Division	External
Biblical Counseling	87977
Biblical Spirituality	88977
Church History	84477
Leadership	91677
Ethics	85977
Evangelism and Church Growth	88677
Missiology	86477
New Testament Studies	83977
Old Testament Studies	82977
Philosophy	85477
Preaching	86977
Theology	84977
World Religions	88277

6.2.3 Independent Study Approval

To request an independent study, PhD students must submit the Independent Study Contract and include a copy of the syllabus. Approval must be granted by the student's supervisor, the RDS office, and the school dean.

The steps for getting an independent study approved are as follows:

1. Before the term begins, you will need to work with your professor to develop an agreeable syllabus for the independent study. Please use the RDS syllabus template. A syllabus must include:
 - a. Assigned readings (somewhere in the range of 3000-5000 pages).
 - b. A substantial research and writing project (not less than 5000 words, not counting footnotes).
 - c. A schedule of at least 4 meetings to critically discuss the readings and writing assignment.

Once the student and professor have agreed upon a syllabus, the student will submit the document to our office. The RDS office will send the contract and syllabus to all required parties. At the conclusion of the term, the professor will send the RDS office a graded copy of the student's research paper, which will serve as the final grade and artifact for the course.

6.3 Interrupted Status Policy

The purpose of interrupted status (IS) is to allow a PhD student in good standing to take a semester away from the normal program requirements and fees due to a particular need. Examples of justified IS needs are family matters, health crises, or excessive financial strain.

- Only one IS semester will be granted to each student during the course of the PhD program.

- No IS requests will be granted retroactively.
- The granting of an IS semester does not count toward the total number of semesters a student is enrolled in the program and thus toward the maximum length one is allowed to be in the PhD program. It also does not count toward the number of semesters accrued (8) after which a student is charged the continuation fee.
- During the IS the student is not required to pay tuition, though this time period does *not* reduce the total program tuition fee due by time of graduation.
- Applying for IS due to financial strain is only legitimate if a student would otherwise need to withdraw from the program.
- During the IS the student may not submit work to professors nor expect interaction with his/her professors.
- There is a \$100 IS fee.
- If a student cannot resume studies and tuition payments after the granted IS period then the student must withdraw from the program. If a student in otherwise good standing must withdraw from the program they will be welcome to re-apply for entrance into the program within 2 years of initial withdrawal once the original causes for the IS have been sufficiently resolved. The re-application procedure is shortened and does not require a new interview or entrance exams, but it does require confirmation that the IS problems have been resolved.
- No coursework credits will be lost if a student in good standing re-enters the program immediately following an IS.
- A student who is a member of a military reserve unit and whose studies are interrupted by a call to active duty must inform Academic Records of his or her call to active duty and the duration of the call. The student shall then be granted a leave of absence from his or her academic program. A student who returns to his or her academic program within one year of his or her release from active duty shall be reinstated to the program with no loss of status. This leave of absence does *not* count toward the total number of semesters a student is allowed to be in the program. A student who fails to return within one year of his or her release from active duty shall be administratively withdrawn.
- International students residing in the United States on an F1 Visa must contact the Manager for International Services prior to applying for IS. Any time off from the program may affect F1 Visa status.

To apply for an interrupted status a student must complete the application for interrupted status (<https://inside.sbts.edu/phd-current-students/phd-student-forms/>) and discuss the circumstances requiring an IS with their supervisor, who must approve the application.

Interrupted status decisions are made by the RDS office and will be communicated to the student by the RDS office.

6.4 MDiv Classes and PhD Seminars

MDiv classes and PhD seminars are distinct course offerings. This means that PhD students may not take MDiv courses for PhD seminar credit and conversely, MDiv students may not take PhD seminars. Per RDS office approval, MDiv students may take the research languages courses offered by the RDS office if they have been accepted into the PhD program.

6.5 Continuation Fee

If a student extends their course of study beyond the standard eight (8) semesters, they will pay a \$2,000 continuation fee each fall and spring semester until they graduate. Students who submit their supervisor-approved defense draft to the RDS office before July 1 (fall) and December 1 (spring) can apply to have their continuation fee waived for the following semester in which they would graduate. The application for the fee waiver can be obtained through the RDS office.

6.6 Withdrawal from the Program

If a student must withdraw from the program, he or she should complete the necessary application (<https://inside.sbts.edu/phd-current-students/phd-student-forms/>). If approved, the withdrawal will be presented to the seminary faculty.

6.7 Dismissal From the Program

Students may be dismissed from the program for conduct against the SBTS student code of conduct, failure to make satisfactory academic progress, or failure to work constructively with supervising faculty or colleagues. Under normal circumstances, students will be given warning and placed on probation prior to dismissal. However, students may be dismissed without warning.

7 Contact Information and List of Official Forms

This manual is a digest of current policies and procedures for the PhD program. For the answer to questions not answered in the manual, please contact Research Doctoral Studies (502-897-4119; email rds@sbts.edu), located on the first floor of Norton Hall (room 157).

Please note that official communication from the Research Doctoral Studies office will normally come via seminary email accounts. Professors and students are responsible for any information or instructions delivered through this means that may be pertinent to their programs.

Students in need of a specific form mentioned in this manual may contact the RDS office (rds@sbts.edu) to receive the form. Additionally, most of the forms can be found on the institution's website (<https://inside.sbts.edu/phd-current-students/phd-student-forms/>).

Research Doctoral Studies Office | Norton Hall, Room 157 | rds@sbts.edu | 502-897-4119