

QUICK REFERENCE • RESEARCH DOCTORAL STUDIES

PhD Supervisor Responsibilities and Requirements

PhD Supervisors guide students through the Advanced and Candidate phases, oversee prospectus development, direct dissertation writing, and conduct oral defenses.

Supervisor Assignment & Advising Expectations

- **Assignment Timeline:** Departments assign supervisors at the beginning of the Advanced Phase.
- **Mandatory Meetings:** Supervisors must meet with their advisees at least twice per semester.
- **Academic Advising:** Supervisors advise students on program progress, course registration, degree milestones, language requirements, and dissertation alignment. Supervisors are expected to respond to their students within one business week.
- **Dissertation Review:** Supervisors are expected to respond to their students with feedback on a single dissertation chapter within three business weeks.

Program Approvals & Administrative Authorizations

All approvals and administrative authorizations must be processed through the RDS office.

- **Course Load Overrides:** Written approval from both the supervisor and the RDS Director is required for a student to take more than two seminars in a single term.
- **Double Major Approvals:** Double concentration degree plans (requiring 9+ seminars and 8+ colloquia) must be jointly approved by the supervisor and the RDS office.
- **Language & Methodology Options:** Supervisors advise and approve specialized research language/methodology choices (e.g., Empirical Research, Cultural Anthropology and Ethnographic Research, or Modern Field Languages).
- **Independent Study Contracts:** A professor works with students to design syllabi (requiring 3,000–5,000 pages of reading, a 5,000+ word research paper, and at least 4 critical discussion meetings), and supervisors approve the Independent Study Contract prior to the term.
- **Interrupted Status (IS):** Supervisors must discuss and endorse student applications requesting a one-semester leave of absence due to financial, medical, or family hardship.
- **Academic Integrity / Data Assistance:** Supervisors must pre-approve any third-party quantitative statistical analysis assistance utilized by the student.

- **Typical Courses:** Faculty may teach preapproved seminars, colloquia, research languages, or independent studies. New courses must receive full faculty approval prior to being offered.

Prospectus Mentorship & Departmental Hearing

- **Prospectus Development Sequence (81220–81223):** Supervisors mentor students through a 4-course sequence during the Advanced Phase to develop a defensible prospectus.
- **Prospectus Hearing:** Once the supervisor determines the prospectus draft is ready for defense, the student contacts the supervisor and RDS office to schedule the prospectus hearing via zoom. Residential students present their prospectus in colloquia.
- **Submissions:** The student must submit his or her revised prospectus (after the hearing and style reading) to the RDS office via Canvas course 81910.

Committee Leadership, Dissertation & Defense

- **Committee Selection:** Supervisors determine two SBTS faculty members who will serve on the dissertation defense committee.
- **External Reader Recruitment:** For concentrations within the School of Theology, the supervisor selects an external reader and makes an initial connection to confirm their willingness to serve prior to draft submission. Then, the RDS office contacts the external reader with their contract.
- **Defense Draft Approval:** Supervisors must review and approve the student's complete dissertation defense draft prior to its submission to Canvas (by September 1 for fall defense or February 1 for spring defense). The length of a 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 should not exceed 15,000.
- **Continuation Fee Waiver:** Supervisors must approve defense drafts submitted prior to July 1 (fall) or December 1 (spring) for students seeking a waiver of the \$2,000 continuation fee.
- **Oral Defense Execution:** Supervisors attend the oral defense in-person, evaluate the candidate alongside committee members using the Dissertation Defense Rubric, and submit completed evaluation documents to the RDS office.
- **Defense Failure Guidance:** In cases where a dissertation fails defense, the committee (led by the supervisor) recommends whether the student receives one semester to revise and re-defend or is awarded a Master of Theology (ThM) degree.