Doctor of Philosophy – Christian Apologetics

Date of Jury: July 28, 2026

Jury Members: Terry Iles (PhD Director), Charlie Ray III, Jeff Riley, Tawa Anderson (Program Coordinator), Audrey Belmore (PhD Coordinator), Ethan Jones, Preston Nix, Adam Harwood, and Emily Dean

PLO 1: The student will demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of Christian Apologetics.

ATS Degree Program Goal – 5.13 a gaining a comprehensive knowledge of the discipline(s) studied;

Measures (means of program assessment)	**Criteria for Success (benchmark set last cycle)**	**Results (report, summarize, reflect)—disaggregate by location and semester**	**Use of Results (make action plan to reach criteria, set new criteria if needed, AND discuss success of previous cycle's plans)**
Direct Measures (at least one) 1. Comprehensive Exam Evaluation Rubric – Measure percentage of students who achieve a score of "pass" or above. ***Indirect Measures (at least one)*** 1. End of Semester Supervision Report question: "On a scale of 1-4, how do you feel you are progressing in your comprehensive knowledge of your field/major?"	DM#1. 80% of students receive a grade of "pass" or higher. IM#1. 3.5	DM#1. No students completed comprehensive exams in Christian Apologetics during the period. IM#1. • Spring 2024: 3 (1 student), 4 (1 student) • Fall 2024: No responses • Spring 2025: 3 (1 student), 4 (1 student) • Fall 2025: 2 (1 student) • Total: 3.2 (5 total responses) **Reflection:** • Christian Apologetics is still a relatively new major within the PhD program, so no students took comprehensive exams during the assessment period.	• Adjust benchmark for DM#1 to 70% of "pass" or higher and 90% of "low pass" or higher. • The jury recommends that the PhD Office send a monthly email to all PhD supervisors as an encouragement to meet with PhD supervisees that month. The email will include suggested topics for supervision meetings. The suggested topics will include regular discussion of how to grow in comprehensive knowledge of the field of study. • There are concerns about the accuracy of the results received for IM#1 due to the paucity of students actually completing the surveys. We recommend that the

		• The specific question used for IM#1 was established in the last jury. The benchmark for IM#1 was not met for the PhD program as a whole. However, there are concerns over the accuracy of the data since only a limited number of PhD students completed the survey: 24 in Spring 2024, 23 in Fall 2024, 43 in Spring 2025, and 24 in Fall 2025. So, there has never been a survey in which half of the PhD students across the whole program have participated.	Research Doctoral Oversight Committee, in conversation with the Registrar's office, consider including the student survey as part of the mandatory registration process for PhD students.

PLO 2: The student will demonstrate competence in research and writing by producing original research contributing to scholarship in Christian Apologetics advancing theological understanding within Christian contexts.

ATS Degree Program Goal – 5.13b developing competence to engage in original research and writing that advances theological understanding for the academy and for communities of faith

Measures (means of program assessment)	**Criteria for Success (benchmark set last cycle)**	**Results (report, summarize, reflect)—disaggregate by location and semester**	**Use of Results (make action plan to reach criteria, set new criteria if needed, AND discuss success of previous cycle's plans)**
Direct Measures (at least one) 1. Dissertation Defense Evaluation Rubric– Measure percentage of students who achieve a score of "pass" or above. 2. Based on student reporting to the PhD office via PhD post and end of semester surveys, measure student participation in professional	DM#1. 80% of students achieve a "pass" or higher on their dissertation defense. DM#2. 50% of students have published an article/book review or presented at a professional society.	DM#1. No students defended dissertations during the period. DM#2. • 3/6 students who completed survey reported presenting at a conference.	• Set benchmark for DM#1 to 80% of students receiving a "pass" or "high pass." • Assessment of PLO2 could be improved by adding another Direct Measure based on the evaluation of dissertations by external readers. This will enable us

societies/conferences and publication in the field. ***Indirect Measures (at least one)*** 1. End of Semester Supervision Report question: "On a scale of 1-4, how do you feel you are progressing in your ability to produce original research contributing to scholarship in your field?"	IM#1. 3.0	• 2/6 students who completed survey reported publication in the field. IM#1. • Spring 2024: 3 (1 student), 4 (1 student) • Fall 2024: No responses • Spring 2025: 3 (1 student) • Fall 2025: 3 (1 student) • Total Avg.: 3.25 **Reflection:** • Christian Apologetics is still a relatively new major within the PhD program, so no students defended dissertations during the assessment period. • The benchmark for DM#2 was met. At least 50% of students who completed the survey reported a conference presentation or publication in the field. However, the exact meaning of this benchmark is unclear. Several of the responses will represent repeat responses from the same student over the course of several semesters. The benchmark does not clarify how often students are expected to participate in these activities. The same concerns about the number of students completing the survey apply to DM#2 as well.	to compare our faculty's evaluations of students' competence in producing original research that contributes to scholarship with the evaluation of scholars outside of our institution. This will improve the accuracy of our assessment of this PLO. The benchmark for this new Direct Measure will be set at 80% receiving a "pass" or "high pass" from the external reader. • The jury recommends that the PhD Office send a monthly email to all PhD supervisors as an encouragement to meet with PhD supervisees that month. The email will include suggested topics for supervision meetings. The suggested topics will include regular discussion of how to improve competence in research and writing. • Adjust the benchmark for DM#2 to "50% of students publish an article/book review in peer-reviewed publication or present at a professional society once during the assessment period." PhD Director will communicate this goal with faculty through faculty training.

		• The benchmark for IM#1 was met. The previous jury identified this question from the student survey as the Indirect Measure. Concerns remain about how representative these results are of the student body as a whole due to the small number of students completing the survey.	• There are concerns about the accuracy of the results received for IM#1 due to the paucity of students actually completing the surveys. We recommend that the Research Doctoral Oversight Committee, in conversation with the Registrar's office, consider including the student survey as part of the mandatory registration process for PhD students.

PLO 3: The student will demonstrate a capacity for a vocation of theological scholarship for research, writing, teaching, and learning whether in the academy, Christian ministry, counseling, or other areas of professional leadership.

ATS Degree Program Goal – 5.13c and demonstrating capacities for the vocation of theological scholarship in research, teaching and learning, and formation.

Measures (means of program assessment)	**Criteria for Success (benchmark set last cycle)**	**Results (report, summarize, reflect)—disaggregate by location and semester**	**Use of Results (make action plan to reach criteria, set new criteria if needed, AND discuss success of previous cycle's plans)**
Direct Measures (at least one) 1. Students who have guest lectured and/or have Teaching Contracts	DM#1. 20% of students report teaching.	DM#1. • 0/6 students who completed the survey reported guest lecturing or having teaching contracts.	• The jury recommends that the Research Doctoral Oversight Committee consider revising the language of PLO#3 from "...for research, writing, teaching, and learning..." to "...for research, teaching and learning, and formation..." The removal of "writing" is due to the fact that PLO#2 already addresses competence in writing. Formation is added to emphasize the role of personal growth and service to others in various contexts.
2. Students serving in vocational ministry, counseling, or other areas of professional leadership	DM#2. 80% of students report serving in vocational ministry, counseling, or other areas of professional leadership.	DM#2. • 4/6 students who completed the survey reported serving in vocational ministry, counseling, or other areas of professional leadership.	
Indirect Measures (at least one) 1. End of Semester Supervision Report questions: "How do you feel you are progressing in your teaching abilities?"	IM#1. 3.5	IM#1. • Spring 2024: No responses • Fall 2024: No responses • Spring 2025: 3 (1 student)	

		• Fall 2025: 3 (1 student) • Total Avg.: 3.0 **Reflection:** • None of the benchmarks were met. • All of the measures for PLO3 are based on the end of semester survey. So, there are concerns about how representative the results are since only a small number of PhD students have completed the survey.	• Adjust the language of DM#1 to specify "in higher education." • Adjust the benchmark for DM#1 to 30% of students report teaching at least once over the assessment period. • The jury recommends that the PhD Office send a monthly email to all PhD supervisors as an encouragement to meet with PhD supervisees that month. The email will include suggested topics for supervision meetings. The suggested topics will include regular discussion of teaching and service in vocational ministry, counseling, or other professional leadership. • Keep benchmark for DM#2 at 80%. • Every measure for PLO3 relies on data from the student survey. Since a small percentage of the PhD student population completes the survey, there are concerns about how accurate the results are. We recommend that the Research Doctoral Oversight Committee, in conversation with the Registrar's office, consider including the student survey as part of the

			mandatory registration process for PhD students.

Executive Summary: The jury recognizes several areas of possible improvement in helping students achieve the program's stated learning outcomes. One consistent challenge is the lack of student responses to the end of semester survey sent out by the PhD Office. The recommendation is for the Research Doctoral Oversight Committee to consider making this survey a mandatory part of the registration process for PhD students in order to increase student participation and gather more representative data. The jury also suggests that the PhD Office send monthly reminders to PhD supervisors to schedule supervisor meetings with their students. This reminder will also include talking points that address all three PLOs for the degree. Each of these suggestions affects all three PLOs. More localized suggestions include adding external reader dissertation evaluations as a Direct Measure for PLO#2 and revising the verbiage for PLO#3.