

**MANUAL FOR RESEARCH DOCTORAL  
PROGRAMS**

Doctor of Philosophy

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary  
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## INTRODUCTION

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary offers a fully accredited, resident, academic research doctoral degree: Doctor of Philosophy. The PhD mission statement is as follows:

*The Doctor of Philosophy degree at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is an advanced scholarly research degree that equips students for service in higher education, Christian ministries, and denominational agencies (SBC).*

Graduates of the Doctor of Philosophy degree program will be able to do the following:

- Demonstrate mastery of a body of knowledge related to a chosen field of study
- Design, implement, and report research
- Impart knowledge of the chosen field through teaching and other communication skills
- Express commitment to the vocation of theological scholarship

The Manual for Research Doctoral Programs provides the policies and procedures for students enrolled in the research doctoral programs and for related faculty and administration. While the purpose for this manual is to describe these programs and related procedures and policies, the seminary retains the right to change programs, policies, courses, schedules, teachers, requirements, and all other aspects of the curriculum at any time.

All PhD program forms may be obtained from the PhD office, and most are available on the PhD area of the seminary website ([nobts.edu/phd](http://nobts.edu/phd)).

## I. ADMINISTRATION OF RESEARCH DOCTORAL PROGRAMS

### I.1 Faculty, Divisional, and Committee Roles and Responsibilities related to the PhD Program

#### ***I.1.1 Faculty***

The faculty of the graduate school of the seminary is responsible for making certain decisions regarding the following:

- Establishing standards for admission, candidacy, and graduation
- Determining degree requirements
- Recommending candidates for degrees
- Reviewing degree programs

### ***1.1.2 Academic Leadership/Curriculum Committee [ALC]***

The Academic Leadership/Curriculum Committee is responsible for considering and recommending to the faculty all matters involving the standards of instruction, the determination of requirements for degrees, testing programs, class schedules, and in general the formulation of the educational policy regarding doctoral programs.

### ***1.1.3 Director of the PhD Program [PhD Director]***

The Director of the PhD Program is the chief administrator of the PhD program. The PhD Director is responsible for performing the following functions to administer and implement the academic policies and curricular programs related to research doctoral programs:

- Process applications for admission
- Chair the Research Doctorate Admissions Committee
- Chair the Research Doctoral Oversight Committee
- Certify applications and reports of doctoral progress
- Present matters for consideration to the ALC
- Represent doctoral programs to the Curriculum Committee
- Represent doctoral programs to the Graduate Dean's Council

### ***1.1.4 Research Doctoral Oversight Committee [RDOC]***

The Research Doctoral Oversight Committee (RDOC) is composed of the PhD Director, the Dean of Graduate Studies, the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, the Registrar, and seven additional faculty members from diverse disciplines. The committee meets regularly during the academic year as needed.

#### **A. Administrative Responsibilities**

The primary responsibility of the RDOC is to assist with the administrative oversight of policies and other matters for the research doctoral programs, including the following:

- Assess the PhD program in the accreditation review process.
- Implement and interpret existing policies regarding the PhD program.
- Acknowledge terminations and withdrawals from the program.
- Consider petitions and appeals from students in the programs.
- Adjudicate and approve IRB applications.

#### **B. Review of Institutional Review Board (IRB) Applications**

The Institutional Review Board [IRB] is a subcommittee of the RDOC consisting of members teaching in areas that deal with research involving human subjects.

This subcommittee advises concerning educational exemptions from IRB review and evaluates proposed research with human subjects regarding risk and protection of participants' rights, such as confidentiality and informed consent. The research cannot proceed without IRB approval. See Section III.I. Institutional Review Board for a detailed explanation of this process.

### ***1.1.5 Research Doctorate Admissions Committee***

The Research Doctorate Admissions Committee meets in October and March. Its responsibilities include:

- Accepting applicants to the PhD program.
- Approving applicants' requests for transfer of credits or any exceptions to program admissions.

### ***1.1.6 Academic Divisions***

The faculty of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is subdivided by specialty into four divisions: Biblical Studies, Church Ministry, Counseling, and Theological and Historical Studies.

#### **A. Responsibilities of Each Division**

Review the doctoral program prerequisites specific to their academic discipline and recommend changes to the RDOC.

Develop and evaluate entrance screening mechanisms, such as entrance examinations, research papers, and entrance interviews, and report the results to the PhD Director.

#### **B. Approval of Research Proposal**

At the conclusion of Supervised Mentorship II, a student may submit a dissertation proposal for approval. The student's supervisor will first determine if the proposal is ready for submission and then a committee of 2-3 other division faculty will review and evaluate the research proposal as outlined in Section II.4.1. If the research proposal is not approved, it will be returned to the student with notations of deficiencies. When the proposal is approved, the student should notify the PhD Director (via the PhD office) to give authorization to proceed with the Prospectus Development course.

## **I.2 Faculty Supervision**

Supervision begins during the admission process into PhD Studies. Applicants will select their top 2 or 3 supervisor preferences and will reach out to schedule an interview with them individually to evaluate whether they would serve as the supervisor of that student

(based on research interest, expertise, and availability). The faculty member has the prerogative to choose the students they wish to supervise.

The supervisor should have expertise in at least one area of the student's chosen field of study. The supervisor may also have familiarity and expertise in additional areas based on their own PhD, writing, and experience teaching. If a potential student does not want to focus on the faculty member's area of expertise, then there are three options: 1) If the faculty member agrees to continue to work with the student, then the faculty member must provide a rationale and make a case as to why he or she is qualified to supervise the dissertation in an area outside of their area of expertise. 2) Require the student to focus on areas within the faculty's area of expertise. 3) Encourage the student to work with another faculty member who has expertise in the area where the student wants to focus (see Appendices II and III).

### ***1.2.1 Supervisor Responsibilities***

The supervisor will be responsible for preparing students to become experts and scholars in their disciplines, ensuring that students develop competency in their fields and mastery of their areas of specialization. The faculty supervisor and student will submit a [Supervisor Agreement Form](#) with the signatures of the student, supervisor and divisional associate dean to the PhD office. The PhD Director will inform the division associate dean, the student, and the faculty supervisor of the appointment.

The supervisor will guide the student in developing their research topic into a proposal and then into a prospectus. The supervisor will also remain involved in the dissertation stage by offering direction and critical feedback along the way.

The faculty supervisor must meet regularly with their students at least once a month every semester that the student is on active status during the residency stage. These meetings should begin the first semester the student begins in the PhD program. Meetings with students should focus on any matters related to their current seminars, research interests, and preparation for prospectus and comprehensive exams. The supervisor may recommend additional reading, preparation, or training in areas where the student may have some deficiencies. Consequently, supervision will prepare students for the Comprehensive Exam and direct students in developing a statement of research interest.

Both supervisors and students will complete an **End-of Semester Supervision Report Questionnaire** (sent out by the PhD office) at the end of each semester.

#### **Responsibilities of a faculty supervisor:**

*Before a Student's Entrance into the Program:*

- Research, write, and present at academic conferences
- Recruit students to study with him/her

- Provide leadership through the entrance process (interview, exam, etc.)
- Recommend acceptance into the program and agree to supervise specific students

*During the Residency Stage:*

- Regularly meet (at least once a month) with their students regarding research interest and progress in the program/seminars
- Advise toward certain seminars based on area of interest/study
- Evaluate and review the student's progress through the program
- Assist in modifying seminar papers into content suitable for conference presentations and articles
- Provide and help the student develop a bibliographic reading list for field of study and for comprehensive exams
- Guide and direct the student to develop a robust research proposal
- Oversee the proposal's development into a prospectus in conjunction with the prospectus development course
- Help students prepare for the comprehensive exams
- Write and conduct the comprehensive exams (written/oral)

*During the Dissertation Stage:*

- Lead the prospectus approval process (which includes enlisting others from the discipline to offer feedback and approval)
- Select/Appoint the Dissertation Committee (2-3 other faculty readers) for prospectus approval
- Work with the candidate throughout the writing of the dissertation — offering substantive feedback along the way
- Schedule the Defense when the dissertation/candidate is ready
- Conduct the Dissertation Defense (2-3 other faculty readers + external reader)

***1.2.2 PhD Committees***

A PhD committee of faculty members will form for the purpose of conducting the comprehensive examination, evaluating the prospectus, and conducting the dissertation defense. The committee will be selected by the supervisor, division associate dean, and PhD office. The PhD committee serves as a means of quality control to ensure that the student's work and performance meet the academic standards expected at the PhD level.

All committee meetings (comprehensive examination, prospectus, dissertation defense) are open for faculty and invited PhD students to attend, but they may only contribute questions or comments if the supervisor (committee chair) offers an invitation to do so during the meeting.

- A. **Examination Committee** – the faculty supervisor will select 2-3 faculty members from the appropriate division for the purpose of conducting the comprehensive examination and evaluating the student's performance.



- B. **Prospectus Committee** – the faculty supervisor will select 2-3 faculty members from the appropriate division for the purpose of evaluating and approving a student’s prospectus.
- C. **Dissertation Committee** – the faculty supervisor will select 2-3 faculty members from the appropriate division, plus an external reader, for the purpose of evaluating the dissertation and conducting the dissertation defense.

### I.3 Student Responsibilities

The student has final and ultimate responsibility for performance throughout the doctoral program. This responsibility is to be fulfilled in the following areas:

- A. The student must adhere to the applicable dates published in the Graduate Catalog and the guidelines outlined in this manual for registration and submission of various program documents, such as examination applications, petitions, requests, and dissertation defense.
- B. All written materials submitted to NOBTS must be the work of the student, who is responsible and accountable for content, form, style, and editing.
- C. The student should maintain regular contact with his or her supervisor for counsel throughout the doctoral program. A student in residency or senior residency should consult with his or her supervisor before registering each semester.
- D. The student must maintain current information for address, phone, and email address throughout the program. Updated information also should be shared directly with the PhD office.

### I.4 Graduate Catalog

The seminary publishes a Graduate Catalog for each academic year. The student enrolled in a PhD program is encouraged to read carefully through the Graduate Catalog each year. In particular, the student will find helpful current information regarding the academic calendar, current fees, financial aid, etc.

The purpose of the Graduate Catalog is “to describe the Seminary, its programs, and its life. It is not a contract. The Seminary retains the right to change programs, policies, courses, schedules, teachers, requirements, and all other aspects of its ministry at any time.”

## I.5 Academic Appeals

A student may appeal an academic decision of a faculty supervisor or PhD committee to the Research Doctoral Oversight Committee. An appeal of a RDOC decision may be made to the Academic Leadership/Curriculum Committee.

## II. PHD PROGRAM STAGES AND COMPONENTS

The PhD program offered at NOBTS follows a curriculum that utilizes seminars, supervised mentorship, reading seminars, and courses related to research, writing, and teaching all toward the development of an acceptable dissertation and the qualifications to teach at an institution of higher education. Adequate preparation for and superior performance on the coursework and examinations are mandatory for continuance to the next stage of the student's program.

The comprehensive examination and prospectus approval are the delineated milestones to advance from PhD residency to PhD candidacy (ABD) in the program.

The coursework, comprehensive examination, and the dissertation are structured to lead to the completion of the three major components of the PhD program: residency/ThM candidacy, senior residency, and PhD candidacy.

### II.1 Program Stages

Students who hold a master's degree and meet all other qualifications for admission into the PhD program but still need 6 or fewer credit hours of leveling work must complete all leveling requirements within their first year in the PhD program to remain in the PhD program. Failure to meet the leveling work requirements may result in termination from the PhD.

The PhD program has three stages comprised of the following main elements:

1. Residency/ThM Candidacy: Successful completion of Introduction the Research and Writing, 4 PhD Seminars, Reading Seminar 1, Supervised Mentorship 1, and submission of a ThM portfolio (26 hours)
2. Senior Residency: Successful completion of Teaching in Higher Education, 4 additional PhD seminars, Reading Seminar 2, Supervised Mentorship 2, the Comprehensive Examination, and Prospectus Approval (28 hours)
3. PhD Candidacy: Dissertation research and writing (6 or more hours)

<b>PhD Residency (26 hours)</b>	Intro to Research & Writing (3 hours) 4 PhD seminars (16 hours) Reading Seminar I (3 hours) Supervised Mentorship I (3 hours)*
	ThM Portfolio (1 hour) ThM Conferral upon completing 26 hours and submission of writing portfolio
<b>PhD Senior Residency (30 hours)</b>	Teaching in Higher Education (3 hours) 4 PhD seminars (16 hours) Reading Seminar II (3 hours) Supervised Mentorship II (3 hours)* Proposal Approval (0 hours) Prospectus Development (3 hours) Comprehensive Examination – Written & Oral (1 hour) Prospectus Approval (1 hour)
<b>PhD Candidacy (7 hours)</b>	Dissertation Research and Writing (6 hours) Dissertation Defense (1 hour)
<b>Total Required: 63 hours</b>	

\*The timing of Supervised Mentorship I and II is a suggestion; students should decide when to register for these in consultation with their supervisor.

## II.2 Program Components

The PhD program contains a set of components at certain stages required for students to complete toward earning their degree. These components should be completed according to the proposed schedule (although some components may be completed out of order based on scheduling). Students in the residency stage may take up to two seminars and an additional program component (Reading Seminar or Supervised Mentorship) per semester but may not take less than one seminar or program component (unless an exception is approved).

### *II.2.1 Introduction to Doctoral Research and Writing*

The Introduction to Doctoral Research and Writing course is offered as a three day

workshop that meets prior to the beginning of each semester. The course is designed to introduce the student to the literature and techniques of doctoral research. Special attention will be given to the development of research proposals and the presentation of research, including individual guidance in the form and style of research writing. The student should register to take the course in the summer or January prior to the first semester of doctoral work. This course is assessed on a pass-fail basis.

### ***II.2.2 Reading Seminars***

PhD students will take two semesters of Reading Seminars that will focus on reading significant works related to the area of their major. The reading seminars will meet for eight to twelve hours throughout a semester (three or four times per semester or on a weekly basis determined by the professor and/or division). Each meeting will focus on a selection of seminal books and articles on a given topic. The two semesters together represent a year of readings designed to introduce students to the most significant and influential scholarship in their discipline. Students will discuss, engage, and critically interact with the readings during the meetings.

The Reading Seminars will usually be offered in the Fall semesters. Students should take Reading Seminar I in their first year in the program and Reading Seminar II in the second year. Reading seminars are evaluated as Pass/Fail.

### ***II.2.3 PhD Seminars***

Students will take a total of eight PhD seminars during their residency stage. The division of the major determines the specific number of seminars required for that major, but it generally amounts to five or six discipline-specific seminars. Some majors may mandate particular seminars with the option of one or two elective seminars. Two seminars are required for the minor.

PhD seminars are advanced graduate level courses led by a qualified faculty member. PhD seminars differ from a lecture format in that students discuss the readings and present their research with their peers for feedback and discussion. Students are expected to engage the material as informed critical thinkers contributing to the scholarly issues, debates, or discussions in the field of study.

#### ***II.2.3.1 Seminar Structures***

Seminars generally are offered on the following schedules:

- A. Fifteen or sixteen weekly 2.5 or 3 hour sessions
- B. Eight 4-hour biweekly sessions
- C. Four 8-hour monthly sessions
- D. Three 9-hour sessions

Classroom time in seminars not meeting weekly normally is supplemented with between-session online interaction.

The weekly meeting time is established by the professor in consultation with the PhD office. Adjustments to the schedule may be made by the professor in consultation with the members of the seminar, in which case the professor should contact the PhD office to request the change. The PhD office will seek permission from the Faculty Coordinator for Media Services and notify the professor of the outcome.

Seminars and seminar requirements are structured by the professor leading the seminar.

A student may take no more than two seminars each semester.

#### *II.2.3.2 PhD Seminar and PhD Course Attendance*

Students are expected to attend every meeting of a PhD course and to be prepared for participation in the discussion. Missing a class session may result in a failing grade or withdrawal from the seminar. Students who miss a session in a course that meets three or four times during the semester should withdraw from the course to avoid a failing grade.

If an emergency situation arises, the student should contact the professor immediately to discuss options. The professor should communicate the request to the PhD office. If the student is allowed to continue in the seminar, additional work should be assigned to compensate for the absence.

Emergency is defined as a life-threatening personal or family emergency in which circumstances arise during the semester that are beyond the control of the student and prevent class attendance and/or completion of class assignments. Heavy workloads, church responsibilities, or other personal and/or family difficulties normally are not sufficient reasons to deem a situation an emergency.

Repeated absences in multiple seminars may be grounds for dismissal from the program.

#### *II.2.3.3 PhD Seminar Evaluation and Grading*

##### ***II.2.3.3.1 Periodic Evaluation***

The professor will provide the student with a verbal and/or written periodic evaluation regarding individual performance in the course. Attention will be given to total participation, including the caliber of oral and written presentations and the quality of interaction with the professor and student colleagues. This evaluation may take place in a course meeting or in an individual session with the professor.

### ***II.2.3.3.2 Grades***

Students are evaluated in seminar work according to the following scale:

- A - Excellent achievement
- B - Quality achievement
- C - Inadequate achievement (no PhD credit for seminar)
- D - Serious deficiencies in student work (no PhD credit for seminar)
- F - Unacceptable student work (no PhD credit for seminar)

No seminar grade below “B” will count toward degree requirements for the PhD program. Thus, a student making a grade of “C” or below will not receive credit for the seminar and must take an additional seminar to satisfy the requirements of the PhD program. A grade of C or below in any two PhD seminars or program courses will result in automatic termination from the PhD program.

Intensives, Reading Seminars, and Supervised Mentorship are graded on a pass-fail basis.

If a student makes a C or below in a course (seminar, intensive, reading seminar or mentorship), the divisional associate dean and faculty supervisor will meet with the student for evaluation of the student’s continued participation in the program. Either of the following may be recommended:

- A. The student may be allowed to continue in the program the next semester.
- B. The student may be dismissed from the program.
- C. The student may be asked to complete some additional leveling work.

The divisional associate dean and faculty supervisor will make a recommendation to the division. The division associate dean will forward the division’s recommendation to the PhD Director for the RDOC to consider. A recommendation that the student continue in the program should include stipulations for continuance, if any. If the recommendation is to discontinue, the PhD Director will seek input from the student to present with the recommendation to the RDOC. The RDOC will make the final decision, and the PhD Director will notify the student in writing.

### ***II.2.4 Independent Directed Study***

An independent directed study provides a unique opportunity for a student to work one-on-one with a professor. Directed studies enable a student (1) to engage in specialized research under a professor’s supervision or (2) to cover an area not covered in the regular seminar offerings during a student’s scheduled seminar work.

#### *II.2.4.1 Student Guidelines*

Students may take only one directed study during his or her program. Any exception must be approved by the student's faculty supervisor and the PhD Director.

Directed studies should be designed for 4 hours of credit.

A maximum course load would be 11 hours per semester (two 4-hour seminars and one 3-hour program component), including audits. A directed study counts as one of the two seminars allowed in the semester.

Regularly-offered seminars are not to be taken as a directed study. The purpose of the directed study is to pursue areas beyond the scope of regularly scheduled seminars.

#### *II.2.4.2 Directed Study Approval Process and Policies*

The student should make a preliminary inquiry with a professor regarding the professor's availability and the proposed area of focus.

The student should work with the professor to prepare and submit a proposal and syllabus. The student should follow the [Independent Directed Study Proposal Form](#) template on the PhD Program Materials web page and insert the names of the professor of the directed study and the names of the guidance committee members.

If the professor directing the study is external to NOBTS, students should ask the professor for their CV and submit that document with their proposal and syllabus to the PhD office.

The proposal and syllabus must be approved by (1) the professor directing the study, (2) the student's faculty supervisor, (3) the PhD Director, and (4) the Dean of Graduate Studies. The student is responsible for filling out the form and obtaining the signatures of the professor directing the study and their faculty supervisor. After these signatures are completed, the student can submit the form to the PhD office for approval.

#### **The syllabus must contain the following information:**

##### **A. Content**

- a. Directed studies should be designed to incorporate approximately 10 to 15 hours of work per week and must include regular meetings with the professor, the normal schedule being a weekly meeting of one hour (minimum of 16 hours).
- b. In most circumstances, directed studies should incorporate a paper suitable for presentation at an academic society or an article for publication in an academically oriented journal.
- c. An IDS proposal should include minimally the following:

1. Title
2. Description of the study
3. Student learning outcomes
4. Textbooks
5. Requirements and assignments: reading, papers, projects, etc.
6. Schedule and content of each meeting with the professor
7. Evaluation procedure (grading)
8. Selected bibliography

Students whose directed study involves research with human subjects should review the guidelines in Section II.12. Institutional Review Board.

**The proposal must be approved by the last week of the semester prior to the semester of the Independent Directed Study**, though exceptions may be made when the IDS is with an external professor.

#### **A. Fees**

Tuition for a directed study is the per credit hour fee (up to the cap) plus the independent study fee (in addition to the cap) as published in the current Graduate Catalog.

#### **B. Summer directed study seminars**

All directed study seminar work should be completed one week before the beginning of the fall semester.

### ***II.2.5 ThM Portfolio***

Students who successfully complete 25 hours of required coursework may submit a writing portfolio to receive a ThM degree. The writing portfolio may include a copy of all papers, book reviews, or any additional writing from seminars or mentorship. The portfolio will demonstrate the student met the workload to earn a ThM. An assessment of the portfolio will involve an interview with the PhD Director and the supervisor (or a faculty member from the division). Pending approval of the portfolio, the student will receive a ThM at graduation.

Students who received a stand-alone ThM prior to entering the PhD program are exempt and are not required to submit a portfolio. Students who do not have a ThM are required to submit a portfolio and receive the ThM.

#### ***II.2.5.1 ThM Portfolio Process***

When the student completes the requirements of the ThM they may submit a portfolio to earn the ThM degree. ThM students in the PhD program must complete Introduction to



Doctoral Research and Writing, one Reading Seminar or one Supervised Mentorship, and four PhD seminars. Counselor Education and Supervision majors must complete Introduction to Doctoral Research and Writing, one Reading Seminar or one Supervised Mentorship, and five PhD seminars. Stand-Alone ThM students must complete Introduction to Doctoral Research and Writing, four Master's level electives (6000 and above), two PhD seminars, and one Reading Seminar.

**ThM students should compile their portfolio as PDF files within a OneDrive folder.**

The folder should include a copy of all seminar papers, book reviews, and any other written work completed during coursework (the student does **NOT** need to include work from the reading seminar or supervised mentorship courses). The OneDrive folder should be organized accordingly and must indicate what seminar or course the paper was written for and the grade earned on the assignment (students should download their graded assignments from Canvas to keep track; for students compiling a portfolio during the transition from BlackBoard to Canvas, grades may have been lost and in such cases the student is exempt from including the grade).

*The portfolio should also include a one- or two-page written self-evaluation of the student's progress and reflections on what they learned in the seminars.*

Students should submit the portfolio to the PhD office by sharing the OneDrive folder with [phd@nobts.edu](mailto:phd@nobts.edu) and making the folder visible to anyone with the link.

**ThM Portfolios must be submitted by Oct 1 (for Dec graduation) or Mar 1 (for May graduation).**

After submission, the PhD office will reach out to students to schedule the portfolio interview with the PhD Director and the student's supervisor.

Supervisors will complete the [ThM Portfolio and Evaluation Form](#) together with the PhD Director after the portfolio interview.

### ***II.2.6 Supervised Mentorship***

Mentorship is designed to provide an opportunity for the faculty supervisor to work with their students in a more focused and personalized manner. The faculty supervisor may offer mentorship to more than one student at a time, depending on how many students the faculty member is supervising.

Supervised Mentorship will be offered each semester. Students should consult with their supervisor about the best time to register for Supervised Mentorship I and II. While some students may be advised to take Supervised Mentorship I during their first year in the program and Supervised Mentorship II during the second year, others may be advised to wait and take these later in their program after narrowing down their dissertation topic more.

- A. The first semester of mentorship may be bibliographic in nature. It should focus more narrowly on the student's area of specialization. The goal would be to ensure the student is conversant with all the major scholars, issues, and literature in their specialization.
- B. The second semester of mentorship would primarily focus on guiding and overseeing the student develop a robust research proposal. The proposal should consist of:
  - 1) A viable thesis and/or research question
  - 2) A survey of the most relevant precedent research (literature review)
  - 3) A well-defined methodology
  - 4) A case for how it will make a scholarly contribution in the field of study

### ***II.2.7 Proposal***

The research proposal is the student's first formal proposal regarding their dissertation topic. The student must have completed Supervised Mentorship II before submitting this document, and approval of the research proposal must be secured prior to taking Prospectus Development. This document is normally 2500-3500 words, not including the bibliography.

#### ***II.2.7.1 Components of the Research Proposal***

The research proposal should begin with a formal title page and will include several various components depending on the nature of the topic, discipline, or field of study.

##### **1) Research question and problem**

The first step involves transitioning from a viable topic, properly narrowed, to a research question that seeks to solve a research problem. The research question asks for answers specifically related to the topic. However, a dissertation is more than just answering a question. It poses and solves a problem that others will recognize as worth solving. The problem should address a gap in knowledge, an unclear situation, an unresolved problem, or some other question that needs investigation. It is essential to state the problem because it shapes and guides the research.

##### ***Types of Questions***

- a. **'Why'** questions point to the analysis and evaluation of facts, ideas, and events. It probes into the reasons behind an issue.
- b. **'What'** questions lead to outlining and describing the nature of the subject and the issues it raises.

- c. **'How'** questions explore how something works, how it has come together or is organized. It leads to methodological issues and the way one interprets the data.

The research question should do more than ask a question; it should point to a research problem that the dissertation will answer.

## 2a) Thesis Statement or Purpose of Research

The thesis statement directly and specifically states the purpose of research and its major claim. It represents the writer's solution or contribution to solving the research problem. It forms the purpose for the meaning and significance of the research. The thesis statement involves making a claim based on good reasoning and reliable evidence. As such, it must exhibit the following attributes:

- A. **Substantive** – It must convince readers of the importance of the claim/thesis.
- B. **Contestable/Falsifiable** – It must be something that could be refuted or proven wrong.
- C. **Explicit** – It must be clear, specific, and sufficiently detailed to demonstrate how the central concepts will develop throughout the dissertation.

## 2b) Hypothesis(es)

For scientific, social scientific, or quantitative and qualitative research, include a research hypothesis or hypotheses. A hypothesis is an idea or explanation for something that is based on known facts but has not yet been proved. A research hypothesis is a statement about the expected outcome of a scientific study culminating in a dissertation. A hypothesis must have the following attributes:

- A. **Specific** – It must be clear about what is being assessed (who and what is involved) with very specific expected outcomes.
- B. **Testable** – It must be able to collect observable data in a scientifically rigorous fashion to assess whether it supports the hypothesis or not. Can it be proven true?
- C. **Falsifiable** – It must have some identifiable way to test whether a hypothesis is false. If not, it's not a hypothesis.

### **3) Literature Review**

The purpose of the literature review is first to demonstrate a fully professional grasp of the relevant scholarship on the subject and to demonstrate the unique contribution of the dissertation research. While it does not need to be comprehensive for a proposal, the literature review should be thorough enough to demonstrate that the student has a sufficiently advanced awareness of the existing scholarly literature to validate the dissertation proposal as viable.

However, the literature review is more than just an encyclopedic listing of titles with annotations; the student should demonstrate critical engagement and evaluation of the literature. This is essential not only for demonstrating an adequate familiarity with the sources, but it also reveals a student's competency on the subject.

### **4) Methodology**

Give a brief description of the methodology to be employed. The methodology needs to conform to standards appropriate to the discipline. Be sure to discuss the data needed and how they will be interpreted. Identify key issues that are relevant to the research methodology.

### **5) Importance of the study**

Include a description of the importance of the proposal. What will this research contribute to the academic discipline? Be sure to demonstrate how the proposal fills a gap, challenges a consensus, or otherwise makes a genuine contribution to the scholarship of one's field. A dissertation must make an original academic contribution to a discipline in the field of the student's major. To make a contribution means it will either clarify, illuminate, develop, correct, or provide new knowledge to a given sub-discipline. A contribution does not need to be groundbreaking or make grand claims, but it should add something new to the scholarly discourse in the field.

### **6) Bibliography**

The bibliography should include key works that have been examined and indicate awareness of major works in the field of inquiry. It should include major works in primary sources, monographs, and journals. If relevant, it should include foreign language works and not just those in English.

#### *Suggested Resources for Proposal:*

- a. Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, Joseph Bizup, and William T. FitzGerald, *The Craft of Research*, 4th ed.

- b. Paul D. Leedy and Jeanne F. Ormrod, *Practical Research: Planning and Design*, 12th ed.
- c. John D. Cone and Sharon L. Foster, *Dissertations and Theses from Start to Finish*, 2nd ed.
- d. Fred Pyrczak and Randall R. Bruce, *Writing Empirical Research Reports*, 8th ed.

#### *II.2.7.2 Proposal Approval Process*

In order to qualify to take the next Prospectus Development course (see II.2.8) in January or the summer, the student should submit their research proposal to their supervisor with enough time for the supervisor to approve and submit the proposal to the PhD office by the last day of the semester. The supervisor will appoint 2-3 additional faculty readers from the academic division to evaluate the research proposal and provide feedback to the supervisor. Final approval of the research proposal will be given by the supervisor and the 2-3 faculty readers. Major changes in the direction of the dissertation after the research proposal has been approved will require resubmission to the supervisor and faculty readers for approval according to the above procedure.

A [Proposal Evaluation Form](#) is available at nobts.edu/phd. Students are advised to evaluate their work carefully in all of these areas prior to submitting the research proposal to their supervisor.

When a decision is made, the supervisor should complete the [Proposal Approval Form](#) and **submit the form and the final approved proposal** as a PDF to [phd@nobts.edu](mailto:phd@nobts.edu).

**The PhD office must receive the Proposal Evaluation and Approval by the last day of the semester for the student to be included in the subsequent Prospectus Development course.** Decisions other than approval also should be forwarded to the PhD office by the last day of the semester.

#### *II.2.7 Advanced Clinical Supervision (Counselor Education and Supervision)*

Students majoring in counselor education and supervision must complete COUN9380 Doctoral Practicum, COUN9390 Doctoral Internship 1, and COUN9391 Doctoral Internship 2. Students must follow the guidelines outlined in the Practicum and Internship Manual, including submitting the application and required paperwork to their faculty advisor for consideration.

#### *II.2.8 Prospectus Development*

Upon the completion of Supervised Mentorship II and a well-formed, approved research proposal, students will enroll in the Prospectus Development course. The purpose of the

course is to introduce and guide students into transforming a proposal into a dissertation prospectus. The supervisors, however, are still responsible for ensuring that the prospectus is well written, well researched, and meets all the standards of a dissertation in their respective disciplines.

The Prospectus Development course is offered in January and June as one-week intensives. To be eligible for this course, a student must have a research proposal approved by the academic division, as described in II.2.7. If the division does not approve the research proposal, the student will be dropped from the course without penalty. The course is graded on a pass-fail basis.

### ***II.2.9 Teaching in Higher Education***

The Teaching in Higher Education course is offered in a one-week intensive format during January and summer mini-terms with post-assignments continuing through the semester. The course is designed to enhance the teaching skills of PhD students anticipating teaching roles in college, seminary, and church settings.

Students in this course will develop an undergraduate or graduate course of their own choosing, from the submission of a course rationale and description through the development of the course syllabus and lesson plans. In addition, they will construct a teaching portfolio prepared to present to an institute of higher learning consisting of a personal philosophy of teaching, a curriculum vita, properly written lesson plans, a syllabus for higher theological education, and a video documentation of teaching.

This course is required of all PhD students and must be completed successfully before taking the comprehensive examination. Students should register online for the course during the PhD registration period. The course is graded on a pass-fail basis.

#### ***II.2.10.1 Advanced Standing for Teaching in Higher Education***

PhD students who have a master's degree in education or Christian education that includes course work in teaching methods and learning theory *and/or* who have a minimum of two years of teaching experience at the college level or above (not including the NOBTS positions as a Grader or Flex Instructor) may request advanced standing for Teaching in Higher Education.

- A. The student should make the request in writing to the PhD Director via an email to [phd@nobts.edu](mailto:phd@nobts.edu). A transcript of the student's master's work (if it is not on file in the Registrar's Office) and a letter from an appropriate academic officer validating and evaluating the teaching experience must be included with the request.
- B. The PhD Director, in consultation with the RDOC, will evaluate the request and supporting documentation. The final decision will be made by the RDOC.

- C. The student will be notified in writing of the decision. If approved, three credit hours for the course will be posted to the NOBTS transcript.

### ***II.2.10 Licensure (Counselor Education and Supervision)***

Students must be licensed or meet the equivalency for licensure according to the LPC Board of Louisiana as professional counselors and/or clinical membership in AAMFT before the oral defense of the dissertation. Students who are licensed must forward a copy of their license to the PhD office no later than one week prior to the defense of the dissertation.

For proof of equivalency, the student should obtain the **LPC/AAMFT Equivalency Evaluation Form** from the department office and submit it to their supervisor for dissertation committee confirmation no later than two weeks prior to the oral defense of the dissertation. The chairperson will forward the approved form to the PhD Director no later than one week before the oral defense of the dissertation. The PhD Director will notify the student in writing and send copies of the letter to the supervisor, division associate dean, and Registrar.

### ***II.2.11 Comprehensive Examination***

Upon completion of all residency requirements (Intro to Research & Writing, 8 seminars, 2 reading seminars, 2 semesters of Supervised Mentorship, Teaching in Higher Education), students will take a comprehensive examination prior to their formal prospectus approval and ABD status. The comprehensive examination is completed in two parts: Written and Oral.

- A. Written:** Focuses both on general field knowledge and the specific area of the student's research specialization. In particular, the student should be able to demonstrate a mastery of the literature, issues, and figures germane to their intended dissertation topic or focus. The goal of this exam would be to demonstrate that the student has a firm grasp of scholarship related to his/her specialization as well as the ability to synthesize it into a comprehensive whole. Nevertheless, the exam should also be able to assess the student's general field knowledge. The supervisor, along with a divisional PhD committee, will write the exam questions (9 hours). Exams can be taken in 3-hour components over the course of 2-3 days. The supervisor can determine whether the exam is completed in person or completed at a distance. If the exam is taken from a distance, the exam must be proctored.
- B. Oral:** Focuses on the student's written answers to allow for more in-depth probing, clarification, or corrections. The oral exam may also inquire of the student's familiarity with his/her field both broadly and specifically. As such, it

may also inquire about the student's research proposal. The goal would be to see if the student sufficiently knows his/her subject and its related literature to begin writing a dissertation on it (2-3 hours).

#### *II.2.12.1 Schedule and Application for Comprehensive Examination*

When ready to take the comprehensive examination, the student should submit the completed [Application for Comprehensive Exam: Written & Oral](#) (obtained from nobts.edu/phd) to the faculty supervisor for signature, who should then forward the application to the PhD Director. After the application has been approved by the PhD Director, the faculty supervisor will form a select committee of 2-3 faculty members from the appropriate division and will schedule the examination with them and the student at least two weeks after the application was submitted (to provide ample time for the faculty to prepare). The oral component should be scheduled for 1-2 weeks after the completion of the written exam to give the faculty ample time to read the written portion and prepare for the oral exam.

The location of the examination is arranged by the supervisor, who is then responsible for communicating both the exact time and place to the student, the other members of the examination committee, the division associate dean, and the PhD Director.

#### *II.2.12.2 Development and Content*

The faculty supervisor will develop and write the written comprehensive examination. The supervisor is also responsible to lead the oral comprehensive examination. In general, the examination addresses broad field knowledge (including content of all course work in both major and minor fields) and material related to the student's specialization (i.e., dissertation focus). As such, part of supervised Mentorship I & II should be focused on preparation for the comprehensive examination.

#### *II.2.12.3 Evaluation*

The examination is evaluated by the supervisor and selected examination committee immediately following the oral part of the comprehensive examination. The evaluation is based on the student's overall knowledge of the field with respect to both breadth and accuracy; ability to maintain engaging dialogue on themes in the field; proficiency in communicating logically and clearly; and an understanding of major and divergent theories, developments, or methods in the field.

The supervisor will communicate the outcome of the examination to the student in the presence of the other members of the examination committee. The result of the examination is reported by the supervisor to the PhD Director on the **Comprehensive Examination Report Form**. The PhD Director will confirm the results of the examination to the student in writing and send a copy of the letter to the division associate dean, supervisor, and Registrar. The examination is graded on a scale of high



pass, pass, low pass, fail with retake allowed, and fail without retake. One semester hour of credit is granted upon successful completion.

A student who does not pass the comprehensive examination may be given one additional opportunity upon the recommendation of the supervisor. The retake may be limited to either the written or oral component of the exam, or the student may be required to retake both the written and oral components. A second failure will result in the student's termination from the PhD program.

Upon passing the comprehensive examination, the student is admitted to the candidacy stage of the program.

After the student passes the comprehensive examination, the student must be registered for dissertation writing for the remainder of the program. Failure to attain candidacy by the last day of the 11th consecutive active semester of the PhD program is grounds for review and termination of the student's program.

Supervisors should reference the [Comprehensive Exam Packet: Instructions, Written & Oral Rubrics, and Results Form](#) on the nobts.edu/phd website for full instructions and forms.

### ***II.2.12 Prospectus***

Guidance for the preparation of the prospectus is given in the Prospectus Development course. Upon passing the comprehensive examination, the candidate may officially submit the prospectus to the supervisor for review. The maximum length of the prospectus is 13,000 words, not including the preliminary pages and bibliography.

The student may present the prospectus to the supervisor prior to the comprehensive examination. Formal approval of the prospectus cannot occur until after successful completion of the comprehensive examination (See II.2.13.2 for approval process).

Research involving human subjects requires an IRB application (see II.2.14) along with a PDF of the prospectus and other items to the PhD office (via email to [phd@nobts.edu](mailto:phd@nobts.edu)) for review by the IRB Committee.

#### ***II.2.13.1 Components of the Prospectus***

The Prospectus is a development of the research proposal into a formal dissertation plan. Much of the material and format is identical to the proposal, but the prospectus should exhibit more details.

##### **1) Thesis (problem statement, purpose)**

Give a clear statement of what the researcher seeks to accomplish—the goal of

the research effort. Address questions such as ‘What will the researcher discover?’ and ‘What will the research demonstrate?’ Behind the thesis statement, there should be a research question (either stated or implied). The readers should read this section and know the basic thrust of the research proposal. The thesis should have some element of interpretation and discovery of something new.

Some students divide the thesis or problem into subproblems, but this is not required or even appropriate for all dissertations. When done, subproblems should be research units (including interpretation of data).

### **1a) Hypothesis or Hypotheses (applicable to scientific or social scientific studies)**

A hypothesis is a conjectural supposition of what the researcher expects to discover. There is no set number (or required set correlation to subproblems when used). With empirical research these should be measurable; with some other forms of research they should be discoverable.

### **2) Thesis Setting (or Problem Setting)**

Students should consider including some or all of the following:

- a. **Assumptions**—underlying self-evident assumptions undergirding the research proposal (these look to the present, not the future).
- b. **Delimitations**—circumscriptions placed on the study to eliminate ambiguity and to exclude certain inferred items one does not intend to be in the study.
- c. **Definitions of terms**—key terms related to the proposal are defined. These are generally operable definitions, with some definitions possibly taken from the professional literature.

### **3) The State of Research (or Review of Related Literature)**

This section should have an introduction that overviews the approach and the structure of the review. A review of literature should focus on presenting a coherent argument that leads to a description of the study. At the end of the section, the reader should be able to conclude that there is the need for another study—the proposed dissertation.

For most entries, the following should be included:

- a. Description of the research and its methodology.
- b. Summary of main arguments, conclusions asserted, or specific contribution to the field.
- c. Analysis and evaluation of the contribution of this research to the field.

#### 4) The Importance of the Study

The focus of this section should be the contribution of the research to the academic discipline. This section should logically be related to and emerge out of the review of literature.

#### 5) Research Methodology

This section should be customized for each dissertation. There is no one outline. Each methodology should dictate its own outline.

Dissertations in the social sciences should include certain items:

**a. Identification of the primary data and possibly key secondary data**

- (1) Criteria for admissibility of the data
- (2) Where the data are located
- (3) How the data will be secured
- (4) How the data will be interpreted [statistical procedures generate data but do not interpret them]

Students will consider all of the above items, but they should write their methodology section (narrative, not “fill in the blank”) specific to the methodology used, focusing on the above items as appropriate.

**b. Replication**—A researcher in the field should be able to read this section and replicate the research. Thus, this section should be a detailed blueprint.

**c. Methodology Outline**—An outline used by many in the social sciences (descriptive survey and experimental research) is the following:

- (1) **Subjects**—Discussion of the identity and selection of the subjects.
- (2) **Measures**—Discussion of various instruments to be used. For a dissertation all instruments must have (a) validity and (b) reliability. These must be documented or the researcher must present a plan to demonstrate them. Without validity and reliability, the research is not valid for a dissertation.
- (3) **Procedure**—Detailed outline of all procedures, such as distribution of surveys, assignment of random numbers, division of experimental and control groups, outlines of experimental treatments, etc.
- (4) **Data analysis**—What will be done with the data generated by the statistics? How will they be presented? What will the researcher be looking for in interpretation?

## 6) Proposed Outline of the Dissertation

Provide a chapter-by-chapter outline. It may be annotated to discuss the content of the chapters and how they contribute to the overall thesis.

## 7) Projected Time Schedule

Provide a plan of action for completing each chapter of the dissertation. It should be realistic and will be subject to change based on the nature of research involved for each chapter.

## 8) Bibliography

### *II.2.13.2 Prospectus Approval*

The student and supervisors agree on an appropriate topic. The student prepares a research proposal that is submitted to the supervisor and a select committee from the academic division for approval.

Once the proposal is approved, the student develops it into a dissertation prospectus during the course RDOC9303 Prospectus Development and in consultation with the student's faculty supervisor.

After passing the Comprehensive Examination, the candidate submits a prospectus to the faculty supervisor and a Prospectus Committee of 2-3 faculty readers from the academic division for review for feedback and corrections. Each member of the Prospectus Committee will complete the [Prospectus Evaluation Form](#). The supervisor will ensure that the final prospectus is sufficiently revised according to the evaluations. Once the prospectus is deemed acceptable to the supervisor and the prospectus committee, these faculty members will sign the [Prospectus Approval Form](#) and the supervisor will submit the **Prospectus Approval Form AND each Prospectus Evaluation Form** to the PhD office via email to [phd@nobts.edu](mailto:phd@nobts.edu). The candidate will also submit their approved prospectus to the PhD office via email to [phd@nobts.edu](mailto:phd@nobts.edu), **but the prospectus will not be accepted as submitted until the supervisor has submitted their evaluation and approval forms**. Once these forms have been submitted, the student officially becomes a PhD Candidate (ABD).

**Supervisors should reference the [Prospectus Evaluation and Approval Packet \(Instructions & Forms\)](#) for full instructions and all forms.**

All prospectuses for dissertations involving research with human subjects also require IRB approval. Once the **Prospectus Approval Form** and [IRB Request Form](#) (for required dissertations) have been submitted, the PhD office will notify the student.

### ***II.2.13 Institutional Review Board***

Students and faculty whose research involves human subjects may require approval by the Institutional Review Board, which is a subcommittee of the Research Doctoral Oversight Committee. The IRB alone can approve research with minimal risk to subjects, while RDOC approval is required for research with more than minimal risk.

The review process adheres to the following guidelines.

#### ***II.2.14.1 Scope***

The IRB is responsible for reviewing all research with human subjects conducted by NOBTS students, faculty, or employees, including those with subjects who are NOBTS students, faculty, or employees, as well as research involved with NOBTS equipment or facilities on property owned by NOBTS or with data from persons related to NOBTS.

Such research includes interviews, surveys and questionnaires, observation of behavior, and usage of information from private databases.

#### ***II.2.14.2 IRB Exemptions***

Exemption from IRB approval may be granted in certain cases. The faculty supervisor is responsible for determining whether student research does or does not require IRB approval. The supervisor should consult the IRB with questions regarding exemptions.

Research conducted by an individual or group does not require IRB approval in the following cases:

- 1) Does not involve a vulnerable population such as children under 18 years of age, prisoners, handicapped, mentally disabled, or any other persons with limited autonomy.
- 2) Involves minimal risk to participants.
- 3) Will be used for educational purposes only, not for publication, dissertation research, or presentation in settings other than the classroom.

#### ***II.2.14.3 IRB Approval Required for Research for Dissemination***

IRB approval is required for research with human subjects that will be published (i.e., dissertations) or presented in settings outside the classroom and for research involving vulnerable populations.

##### **A. Research for class or independent project**

If research for a class or project conducted by NOBTS students, faculty, or staff falls into a category that requires IRB approval, the primary researcher will

complete an [IRB Request Form](#) from the Program Materials page of the PhD area of the seminary website and submit the form to the PhD office no later than one month before approval is needed. The IRB will evaluate the research proposal in the following areas:

- 1) Respect for persons—Is participation voluntary with the option to terminate at any point clearly stated? Is the research described fully in understandable terms with benefits and risks clearly stated? How will participants' identities be protected and confidentiality be maintained so that results cannot be linked to individuals? If subjects include vulnerable populations with limited autonomy, how will their rights be protected?
- 2) Benefits vs. risks—How will the study benefit participants? What is the level of risk? How will benefits outweigh risks?
- 3) Justice—Are participants selected fairly? Are benefits and risks distributed equally among participants? Does the selection process depend on the purpose of the study rather than researcher bias?

## **B. Dissertation research**

Research for dissertations, including pilot studies, that involves human participants is subject to IRB review. The student should submit the [IRB Request Form](#) and the items indicated below to the PhD office (via email to [phd@nobts.edu](mailto:phd@nobts.edu)). IRB approval is required before the guidance committee can approve the prospectus.

Along with the [IRB Request Form](#), the student should submit a PDF of the prospectus, the survey instrument or other research tool, and the informed consent form to [phd@nobts.edu](mailto:phd@nobts.edu) (see Paul D. Leedy and Jeanne Ellis Ormrod, *Practical Research: Planning and Design*, 9th ed., p. 103 for an example).

Any changes in the project after approval by the IRB must be resubmitted for review by the IRB before approval is granted. IRB approval is granted for a maximum of two years and may be subject to review at any time during that period. The IRB must approve the research project BEFORE the researcher makes any contact with subjects. Data collected before IRB approval cannot be used in the proposed research. If the dissertation is not submitted within the two-year IRB approval period, the student will need to contact the PhD office to request an extension.

### ***II.2.14 PhD Dissertation***

#### ***II.2.15.1 Length of Dissertation***

The dissertation is to be a research document in a candidate's major field containing no less than 35,000 words and is not to exceed 85,000 words in the body including footnotes, references, and appendices but excluding bibliography. Rare exceptions must be authorized by the student's supervisor and the PhD Director. Candidates should write as concisely as possible, with clear and adequate exposition.

#### *II.2.15.2 Purpose of the Dissertation*

A dissertation must demonstrate independent and original research in the candidate's field of study. Dissertations must make a scholarly contribution to the field or discipline. To make a contribution means it will either clarify, illuminate, develop, correct, or provide new knowledge to a given sub-discipline. A contribution does not need to be groundbreaking or make grand claims, but it should add something new to the scholarly discourse in the field. It should withstand scrutiny in a peer-review process (i.e., dissertation defense committee) whereby the reviewers affirm it as a contribution.

The external reader represents a significant aspect of the peer-review process in that he or she has expertise in the area of the dissertation's topic. If the external reader does not deem it as a contribution, then that should weigh heavy enough with the dissertation defense committee that it would not pass without significant revisions to warrant it as a contribution. If the external reader deems it a contribution, that affirmation should likewise carry significant weight.

Dissertations must also exhibit a mastery of research methods as well as the competency to present research, analysis, and conclusions in an accurate and persuasive manner. Dissertations are expected to exhibit the highest level of accuracy in terms of content, grammar, and style.

#### *II.2.15.3 Selection of a Topic*

Since selecting a research topic for a dissertation can be a difficult task, the student is advised to begin searching for a topic upon entering the PhD program under the direction of his or her faculty supervisor. The student should have an inquisitive mind that will lead to original research and thought coupled with a mastery of the scholarship on that topic.

At all stages in selecting a dissertation topic, the student should stay in close contact with his or her faculty supervisor to discuss research, viability, and contribution related to the dissertation topic.

The research topic should be characterized by the following:

- A. Originality—the student studies a research problem in a new or substantially different way than prior approaches.
- B. Individuality—the student takes primary responsibility for conceiving,

conducting, and reporting research.

- C. Proper methodology—the research is characterized by exactness and precision.
- D. Contribution to the academic discipline—the topic is of interest to the academic guild.

The student should carefully and fully examine the subject in the appropriate scholarly journals, monographs, essays, and dissertation abstracts before submitting the research proposal.

Note: When considering a topic related to the life or ministry of a living person, the student and supervisor should exercise special care. Normally, a living person who is the subject of the dissertation should have made a significant contribution to the field, and there should be some sense of closure to that person's ministry or work on a given topic.

#### *II.2.15.4 Dissertation Submission*

As candidates research and write their dissertations, they should submit chapters to their supervisors for review and feedback. The supervisor should provide regular feedback throughout the process. Once the dissertation manuscript is completed and compiled into a single document, the candidate should consult with the supervisor for review and feedback.

Once the supervisor is satisfied with the dissertation and convinced of its ability to withstand defense, the candidate may submit their dissertation to the PhD office along with required submission forms. Dissertations may be submitted at any point in the academic year, but in order to graduate in December, candidates must submit no later than September 1st; in order to graduate in May, candidates must submit no later than February 1st.

The supervisor must submit the [Supervisor Approval of Dissertation Submission Form](#) at the time of submission or within a week of submission in order for the candidate's dissertation to be accepted for defense. Candidates should communicate with their supervisor about their intention to submit prior to submission to ensure the supervisor is aware and approves the submission.

The candidate should submit a dissertation to the faculty that is as free from errors as possible. The dissertation should represent the candidate's ability to do research and produce a work of good literary quality. Prior to submission of the dissertation, the candidate should proofread and edit the text regarding typing, form, style, clarity, content, and logic. The writing of a dissertation is a scholarly discipline and should be the work of the candidate in all respects. The candidate should assume all responsibility for the final product. A candidate should be prepared to certify that the dissertation represents his or her own work in every aspect, except for guidance given by or



authorized by the supervisor.

**Students should submit a final draft of their dissertation to the PhD office as a PDF document emailed to [phd@nobts.edu](mailto:phd@nobts.edu) no later than September 1st or February 1st** (if the file size exceeds the limits of an email, upload the PDF to your OneDrive and share the file with [phd@nobts.edu](mailto:phd@nobts.edu)).

**Students must also submit one hard copy by hand or by mail to the PhD office by the same deadline.** If the Sept/Feb 1st deadline falls on a weekend, the hard copy is due the following business day. If the hard copy is submitted by mail but arrives past the deadline, it will be accepted if it has been postmarked at least five days before the deadline. The student will receive confirmation of the submission. The PDF copy will be forwarded to the members of the dissertation committee, the external reader, and the hard copy will go to the Doctoral Form and Style Consultant.

#### *II.2.15.5 Dissertation Readers and Dissertation Committee*

The faculty supervisor will select 2-3 additional faculty readers from the appropriate academic division. These readers should have some area of expertise in the field related to the dissertation. The faculty supervisor and the additional NOBTS faculty readers form the dissertation committee for the defense. The full dissertation committee includes the supervisor, 2-3 faculty readers, and the external reader (see below). Additional faculty members and PhD students may be invited to attend as observers.

**All dissertations will be reviewed and evaluated by an external reader.** An external reader is a scholar in the student's field of research who serves as an independent and neutral reader who is qualified to evaluate the student's dissertation. External readers should have a PhD and expertise in the field. The external reader will receive a stipend of \$500 for their evaluation, feedback, and assessment of the dissertation. External readers serve an advisory capacity in that they only make recommendations, but their recommendations should be afforded full weight in the defense. The external reader represents a significant aspect of the peer-review process in that he or she has expertise in the area of the dissertation's topic. If the external reader does not deem it as a contribution, then that should weigh heavy enough with the dissertation defense committee that it would not pass without significant revisions to warrant it as a contribution. If the external reader deems it a contribution, that affirmation should likewise carry significant weight.

The choice of the external reader may be made in conjunction with the student. The student and supervisor should begin to develop a list of potential external readers at the earliest stages of writing the dissertation. When the student is nearing completion of the dissertation, the student and supervisor should begin to inquire of potential external readers. The supervisor should make an initial inquiry of the external reader's interest, willingness, and availability to serve as the external reader.

Once an external reader indicates agreement to serve as such, the supervisor will submit an [External Reader Request Form](#) to [phd@nobts.edu](mailto:phd@nobts.edu) by September 1 or February 1 in correspondence to the dissertation deadline. The PhD Director will then formally contact the external reader with an offer of remuneration, a PDF copy of the dissertation (hard copies will be mailed upon request), evaluation form, and date for the defense.

**The dissertation must be submitted and sent to the external reader at least one month (4 weeks) prior to the defense date.** The external reader must submit their written evaluation of the dissertation to the supervisor prior to the date of the defense. The external reader is welcome to attend the dissertation defense in person at their own expense, or through Teams. It is not required for the external reader to attend.

#### *II.2.15.6 Date of Dissertation Defense*

The date of defense may be established by the student and supervisor but must consider the availability of the internal and external readers. **Defenses should be held no earlier than 4 weeks after submission (to allow adequate time for the external reader to assess and submit feedback) and must be scheduled before April 15 (for May graduations) or November 15 (for December graduations).** If the candidate and supervisor submit the dissertation and [Supervisor Approval of Dissertation Submission Form](#) *before* the Fall or Spring deadlines, defenses may be scheduled accordingly.

Defense dates must be decided upon within a week of the date when the dissertation was submitted to the PhD office. The readers must have adequate time to review and evaluate the dissertation carefully and thoroughly. The date for the defense must give special attention to the external reader. The defense cannot proceed until the evaluation report from the external reader is received.

Once an acceptable date is determined and communicated to the PhD office, the PhD office will contact the student, and all readers will make a calendar appointment for the day and time of the defense. All defenses will be scheduled as a three-hour block. Defenses may conclude early or take longer as determined by the dissertation committee (supervisor and 2-3 internal faculty readers). For counseling majors, a copy of the student's license or an approved **LPC/AAMFT Licensure Report Form** must be forwarded by the supervisor to the PhD office no later than two weeks prior to the oral defense of the dissertation. Without proof of licensure or equivalency, the oral defense cannot be conducted.

#### *II.2.15.7 Dissertation Evaluation*

**Supervisors may reference the [Dissertation Evaluation and Defense Packet: Instructions & Forms](#) for all instructions and forms.**

A dissertation defense represents a thorough and critical evaluation of the submitted written dissertation. While it is expected the candidate knows his or her content

extremely well, the primary focus of the defense is to ensure that the dissertation is well written, accurate in its treatment of the data, and interacts with the relevant scholarship on the subject in a thorough and accurate manner. A dissertation must make an original and convincing contribution to the field in order to pass.

**Prior to the Dissertation Defense, all Dissertation Committee members will submit a [Dissertation Evaluation Form](#) to the supervisor.**

Each member will evaluate multiple aspects of the dissertation:

- 1) **Thesis or Hypothesis**
- 2) **Methodology**
- 3) **Research**
- 4) **Argumentation**
- 5) **Contribution**
- 6) **Writing**

In the defense, the candidate is expected to articulate the content, methodology, and conclusions of his or her dissertation. The candidate may need to clarify or correct statements and claims made in the dissertations.

Upon concluding the defense, the dissertation will be awarded one of the following evaluation options:

**High Pass** – Demonstrates an outstandingly conversant knowledge and understanding of the field with advanced awareness of scholarship with accuracy, analysis, and original assessment.

**Pass** – Demonstrates an adequately familiar knowledge and understanding of the field with a good awareness of scholarship with accuracy, analysis, but non-original assessment, may have needed a little prompting.

**Low Pass** – Demonstrates an acceptable working knowledge and understanding of the field with above average awareness of scholarship, but weak in terms of accuracy, analysis, and assessment, needed prompting.

**Fail with Resubmission Allowed** – Inadequate knowledge and understanding of the field, limited basic awareness of scholarship, some inaccuracies, poor analysis and assessment, prompting didn't help.

**Fail without Resubmission Allowed** – Inadequate knowledge and understanding of the field, limited basic awareness of scholarship, some inaccuracies, poor analysis and assessment, prompting didn't help, and second fail.

If the dissertation passes but requires revisions that cannot be completed before that

semester's graduation date, the candidate may register for RDOC9000 Program Continuance for one semester while making corrections to the dissertation. Tuition for Program Continuance is at a reduced fee (see the current Graduate Catalog). Program Continuance applies only to students who submit the dissertation by a given deadline and defend satisfactorily. It cannot apply to students who submit the dissertation after a deadline and then defend or submit final copies prior to the upcoming semester.

In the case of a failure of the dissertation, the dissertation committee may or may not allow a resubmission. If a resubmission is allowed, the candidate returns to the writing stage (with its standard tuition and fees), and a period of at least three months must elapse before the dissertation may be presented again. Another dissertation defense may or may not be required depending on the nature of rewrite. Upon resubmission of the dissertation, the dissertation committee will read the resubmitted dissertation and make a final decision. No more than one resubmission is allowed. A second failure of a dissertation results in automatic dismissal from the program.

Resubmission does not involve a commitment as to the time of graduation. If final presentation of the dissertation exceeds seven years after the initial registration for the degree and an extension of time is not granted, candidacy for the degree is forfeited.

#### *II.2.15.8 Reporting Dissertation Evaluation*

After the defense, the supervisor should complete the [Dissertation Defense Results Form](#) and secure the signatures of the other committee members. The form should be forwarded to the PhD Director, who will write to the candidate confirming the committee's decision.

If the dissertation committee passes the dissertation, the supervisor should also sign the [Official Report of Dissertation Approval](#), secure the signatures of the other committee members and the division associate dean, and forward the form to the PhD Director. After the PhD Director signs the form, copies will be made for insertion into the library rare books copy of the dissertation.

#### *II.2.15.9 Final Dissertation Submission*

Following a successful oral defense of the dissertation, the student will make any necessary corrections and submit a PDF of the corrected dissertation to the supervisor no later than three weeks prior to graduation. The supervisor will confirm that the document is satisfactory and then indicate supervisor approval by submitting the [Final Version of Dissertation Submission Form](#) to the PhD office along with the approved PDF of the dissertation no later than two weeks before graduation.

The PhD office will check formatting, insert a typed **Official Report of Dissertation Approval Form**, and return the PDF to the candidate with instructions for submitting it to ProQuest before graduation. For details, students should consult the **Graduation Checklist** sheet on the PhD Program Materials page.

## ***II.2.15 Doctoral Form and Style Consultant Dissertation Review***

### ***II.2.16.1 Chapter Review (optional)***

Before the dissertation is submitted, one chapter (other than the introduction) of the dissertation may be reviewed and evaluated by the Doctoral Form and Style Consultant. The review is optional, but it should be completed at least one month before submission of the dissertation. The student should contact the consultant at least two months before planning to present the chapter for review, as review slots are scheduled on a first-come-first-served basis. The review slot should be treated as a deadline; if the chapter is submitted after the scheduled date, there is no guarantee that the material can be reviewed for the upcoming dissertation deadline. The chapter should be in its final form, with no known errors. A chapter can be submitted for review only one time.

The consultant will review the chapter and mark the copy, noting typographical errors, grammatical errors, and problems related to the appropriate style guide and NOBTS form and style preferences. The marked copy will be returned to the student along with a **Form and Style Assessment Report** indicating the kinds of errors noted. The student should incorporate suggestions into the chapter and the remainder of the dissertation. Turnaround time is scheduled for one week. The consultant may require a meeting with the student.

A copy of the **Form and Style Assessment Report** is provided to the student and supervisor. A copy of the report also will be filed with the PhD office.

### ***II.2.16.2 Submission of the Dissertation for Defense (required)***

The student should contact the Doctoral Form and Style Consultant to confirm the anticipated submission date at least one month before submission.

The Doctoral Form and Style Consultant will do the following:

- 1) Check to be sure items indicated in the chapter review have been corrected (II.2.16.1).
- 2) Review and mark the dissertation copy, noting typographical errors, grammatical errors, and problems related to the appropriate style guide and NOBTS form and style preferences.
- 3) Provide a **Form and Style Assessment Report** to the faculty supervisor.

## ***II.2.16 Graduation***

### *II.2.17.1 Graduation Application*

The PhD candidate must complete the Application for Graduation by August 31 (for December graduation) or January 31 (for May graduation). Students applying to receive the ThM degree must apply for graduation by the same deadline.

### *II.2.17.2 Cap and Gown Order*

The doctoral cap and gown should be ordered early in the student's anticipated final semester as a writing candidate.

### *II.2.17.3 Graduation Practice*

Attendance is required at graduation practice, and students should bring their hoods to the Registrar's Office prior to practice.

### *II.2.17.4 Graduation Ceremony*

Participation in graduation exercises is required of all PhD graduates unless permission is granted to graduate in absentia. Requests for permission to graduate in absentia should be made in writing to the Registrar. Permission is granted only in the case of extenuating circumstances or emergencies.

## **III. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **III.1 Admissions and Student Status**

Application and admission policies are described in the current Graduate Catalog. The application and additional required items are to be submitted online through your application portal.

Students are first assessed by their GPA.

In addition to this initial assessment, the applicant's entrance exam, research paper, division interview, and other items from their application will be used to inform the decision the Research Doctorate Admissions Committee.

#### ***III.1.1 Leveling Work***

If an applicant has nine or more hours of master's-level prerequisite courses to complete, it would be beneficial to apply to the stand-alone ThM program to complete his or her leveling work. This degree includes twelve hours of upper-level master's courses while also allowing the student to complete two PhD seminars, one reading seminar, and Introduction to Doctoral Research and Writing, which all will transfer toward PhD completion upon a potential future acceptance into that program after earning the ThM.

If the applicant has six or less hours of masters-level prerequisite courses to complete, they may receive conditional acceptance to the PhD program contingent on completing all hours of leveling work within their first year in the program. Failure to complete these leveling hours within the first two semesters of program admittance may result in termination from the PhD program.

### ***III.1.2 Stand-Alone ThM***

A PhD applicant may be granted admittance to the stand-alone ThM program by the faculty rather than the PhD program. The ThM is an advanced research degree designed specifically for further academic preparation for pursuing a PhD. After completing the ThM, the student may reapply for the PhD program.

Additionally, applicants may choose for themselves to apply for a stand-alone ThM rather than a PhD, whether for personal academic advancement or in order to complete leveling work required to apply for the PhD program. **See Appendix II for the stand-alone ThM program components.**

### ***III.1.3 Acceptance and Enrollment***

Once accepted into a research doctoral program (ThM and PhD), a student must begin his or her program of studies and enroll for seminars in the next regular semester. If an applicant is approved for admission to a doctoral program but cannot begin studies, the applicant's slot may be vacated, and the application will be returned to the applicant pool for consideration in the next semester. The applicant may petition the division for a delay of entry, and the RDOC will approve or deny the request.

### ***III.1.4 Admission into PhD from the Stand-Alone ThM***

Students who have completed a Stand-Alone ThM at NOBTS may reapply for admission into the PhD program. If their application materials are within two years from ThM to PhD, they may request to use their prior application materials. Applicants to the PhD program from the Stand-Alone ThM, however, must apply for the PhD program online (many of the required additional items will be supplied from the ThM application). Once submitted, the applicant will go through the normal process of admission into the PhD program.

### ***III.1.5 Active Status***

Students enrolled in doctoral programs must maintain active status by registering and paying the required fees each semester until graduation. Failure to register for a semester and pay enrollment fees by the deadlines established by the seminary will result in termination from the program.

Even when active status is maintained, if no consistent progress toward completion of the degree is accomplished, the continuation of the student in the program is subject to review by the faculty supervisor and/or the division, which may recommend termination to the RDOC.

### ***III.1.6 Inactive Status***

Inactive status may be granted to a student who has temporary extenuating circumstances that hinder progress toward the degree. Inactive status does not count toward the time limit for completion of the PhD program. The granting of inactive status will extend the time allowed for completing the degree program by the length of the inactive period.

The following guidelines are operative for recommending and approving inactive status:

- 1) Inactive status is considered for circumstances beyond the control of a student, such as family, medical, financial, or professional crises that would otherwise force the student to terminate his or her program of study. Inactive status is not granted to study for the comprehensive examination or write the prospectus, and it is not normally granted during the writing of the dissertation. Inactive status is not intended to relieve the student of paying fees, to provide temporary hiatus from the program, or to delay for unsubstantial reason the timely pursuit of the degree.
- 2) A request for inactive status should be submitted in writing to the faculty supervisor. The letter should detail the rationale for the request and the semester for which the inactive status is requested. The request should be submitted as early as possible but no later than Monday of the week prior to the beginning of classes in the fall or spring semester. The faculty supervisor will forward a recommendation to the RDOC, which will make a final decision. The PhD Director will notify the student of the outcome.
- 3) Inactive status normally is granted on a semester basis for a maximum of two semesters. Inactive status beyond two semesters requires special consideration and approval from the faculty supervisor and the PhD Director.

Students granted inactive status must pay the inactive status fee for the semester(s). (See Graduate Catalog for current fees.)

The semester following inactive status, the student must register and pay all fees according to the seminary schedule.



### ***III.1.7 Missionary and Military Status***

International missionaries may request missionary status before returning to the mission field. Similarly, students enlisted in the armed forces of the United States may request military status prior to a period of deployment. A request for such status should be submitted in writing to the faculty supervisor. The letter should detail the proposed schedule for completion of the degree program. Students requesting military status must include a copy of their official orders.

The faculty supervisor will forward the letter with a recommendation to the RDOC, which will make a final decision. The PhD Director will notify the student of the outcome.

Missionary or military status students must register for inactive status. If students are in ABD candidacy stage, they must register as writing candidates for a minimum of two semesters while working on the dissertation. A one-time payment of the inactive fee will be required (see the student fees section of the Graduate Catalog). If missionary or military inactiveness extends beyond the proposed schedule, the student must update the faculty supervisor and the PhD Director with a new proposed schedule and/or official orders.

The semester following missionary or military status, the student must register as an active student and pay all fees according to the seminary fee schedule.

### ***III.1.8 Program Proficiency Status and Writing Candidacy Status***

Students who have completed all coursework but not have passed the comprehensive exam or have not yet had their prospectus approved must register for RDOC9010 Program Proficiency to remain active status during the semester. Students must register for something every semester to remain active in the PhD program. Program Proficiency is necessary for semesters when the student only lacks passing the comprehensive exam and/or prospectus.

Students who are in the dissertation stage (ABD) must register for RDOC9600 Writing Candidacy until submission of the dissertation for graduation. Both program proficiency and writing candidates are charged the current cap indicated in the Graduate Catalog.

## **III.2 PhD Program Deadlines, Extensions, Fees, and Transfer of Credit**

### ***III.2.1 Program Length and Time Requirements***

#### ***III.2.1.1 Length of Residency Stage***

The PhD requires at least three years to complete (two years residency and one year

dissertation research and writing). As such, it is possible to complete the PhD degree in three years, but the average is four to five years for most students.

Students may complete the residency coursework in two years by registering for two PhD seminars and one program component (i.e., reading seminar or supervised mentorship) every semester. Students should consider their employment hours and responsibilities when determining how many seminars to take a semester.

Students may complete their PhD residency coursework over three to four years by registering for one PhD seminar and one program component (reading seminar, supervised mentorship) every semester.

All students in the PhD program are considered full-time students.

#### *III.2.1.2 Weekly Time Requirements*

Although there is no set amount of time required for research, a general guide is that students need to allocate about twenty hours of research time per week for each seminar. Thus, students taking a full-time load (two seminars and a reading seminar or supervised mentorship) should plan to be engaged in research about forty hours per week. Students taking a part-time load should plan to engage in research a minimum of twenty hours per week.

#### *III.2.1.3 Maximum Program Length*

The maximum program length is seven years from the date of initial registration. All work for the degree (residency and dissertation) must be completed within that period of seven years.

#### *III.2.1.4. Time Extension for Graduation*

The period allowed for the completion of the degree program is seven years from the time of the initial registration. An extension of time may be considered in the case of extenuating circumstances that would result in the submission of the dissertation after the deadline for graduation in the final semester of a student's program. For students to be eligible for an extension, the faculty supervisor must conclude that students are making satisfactory progress toward completion of their program.

A request for an extension of time for graduation must be submitted in writing by the student to the supervisor prior to the end of the last semester. The request should contain the rationale and extenuating circumstances for the request.

The faculty supervisor will assess the student's work each semester to ensure that the student is making satisfactory progress. After a thorough assessment, the supervisor will

either recommend allowing the extension or recommend termination from the PhD program. The supervisor may request an extension of up to two semesters. The supervisor will forward a copy of the student's request along with his or her recommendation to the PhD Director. A final decision will be made by the RDOC. The PhD Director will notify the student of the final decision.

### ***III.2.2 Fees***

The fee schedule is printed in the current Graduate Catalog and is subject to change without prior notice. Inconsistent payment of fees may jeopardize continuation in the PhD/ThM program. Students should give careful attention to keeping accounts current.

### ***III.2.3 Transfer of Credit and Advanced Standing***

#### ***III.2.3.1 PhD Course Credit from External Institutions***

A request for a transfer of credit may be made at the time of application by submitting the [\*\*Transfer of Credit Request Form\*\*](#) in the application portal. To request credit for PhD courses, a student should submit a written request with official transcripts, a description of the courses or syllabi, and the name of the institution. The division of study will make a recommendation to the Research Doctorate Admissions Committee regarding the number of hours to be transferred and how the credit would be applied (major, minor, or elective).

The division will evaluate transcripts on a case-by-case basis to determine the number of transfer hours acceptable for the NOBTS PhD program. The amount of transfer hours accepted will not exceed 2/3 of the credit hours of the degree sought at NOBTS. Transfer credit will only be considered providing that the work done (1) is eligible for credit in a research doctoral program in the institution in which the credit is offered or (2) is eligible for credit in an advanced program primarily oriented toward theological research and writing. Such institutions must be accredited by the Association of Theological Schools or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation and/or a regional accrediting agency (such as the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools).

The division of study will make a recommendation to the Research Doctorate Admissions Committee regarding the number of hours to be transferred and how the credit would be applied (major, minor, or elective). If the student is accepted into the PhD program, the PhD Director will notify the student in the acceptance letter regarding the request for transfer of courses.

The course will be transferred to the student's transcript following successful completion of his or her first semester in the program.

#### ***III.2.3.2 External PhD Courses as a Current NOBTS PhD Student***

A student who has completed at least two seminars in the major field may request permission to take a maximum of 8 semester hours at the PhD level at another accredited institution to be applied toward the degree requirements at NOBTS.

Students who want to enroll in a PhD seminar at an external institution must make a request to their faculty supervisor. The faculty supervisor and the student must submit a proposal to the RDOC for approval.

The proposal should include the following:

- 1) Course information (institution, faculty of record, course description, syllabus, assignments, etc.).
- 2) A request as to how the credit will be applied (major, minor, or elective).
- 3) A rationale for the proposal (why and how it would enhance the student's PhD studies).
- 4) Verification that the course fits the general criteria noted above (III.2.3.1)

The proposal should be submitted to the RDOC by November 1 for the following spring semester or April 1 for the following summer or fall semester. The approval of the RDOC must occur prior to the student's taking the course.

The PhD Director will notify the student in writing regarding the final decision by the RDOC. Before credit is applied, the student must notify the PhD office of the course's completion, and an official transcript must be received.

### *III.2.3.3 Advanced Standing from Professional Doctoral Programs*

Applicants in Christian education, Christian leadership, biblical exposition, or evangelism who hold the Doctor of Educational Ministry or Doctor of Ministry degree from an institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation and/or a regional accrediting agency (such as the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) may be eligible for advanced standing in the PhD program. To be considered for advanced standing, applicants must fulfill all PhD admission requirements for their major area of study. At least one academic personal reference must be from a professional doctoral program administrator from the degree-granting institution.

Advanced Standing must be requested by submitting a [Transfer of Credit Request from Professional Doctoral Degree Form](#) with the application to the PhD program. Upon recommendation of the division of study to admit and allow transfer and the approval of the Research Doctorate Admissions Committee, maximum credit of two seminars and one reading seminar may be approved for transfer upon the successful completion of two PhD

seminars. A seminar could apply as the elective or as a concentration seminar in the following majors/minors: Christian education, Christian leadership, biblical exposition, and evangelism.

Students with advanced standing would be required to take a minimum of six PhD seminars, one reading seminar, two supervised mentorships, all the required RDOC intensive courses (Intro to Doctoral Research and Writing, Teaching in Higher Education, Prospectus Development), the comprehensive examination, as well as the dissertation and defense in the PhD program.

### III.3 Withdrawal and Termination from the PhD Program

#### ***III.3.1 Withdrawal from the PhD Program***

A student desiring to withdraw from a research doctoral program first should seek counsel from the faculty supervisor. Circumstances may warrant a request for inactive status. Other factors may necessitate complete withdrawal.

Request for withdrawal should be submitted in writing to the faculty supervisor. The faculty supervisor will forward a request to the PhD Director, who will notify the RDOC of the withdrawal. The student's program will cease. The PhD Director will send the student a letter confirming the withdrawal.

#### ***III.3.2 Termination from the PhD Program***

Termination of a doctoral program may result from any of the following conditions:

- Failure to maintain proper grade point average
- Failure to register and pay fees
- Failure to remain actively engaged in PhD studies
- Failure to obtain approval of the prospectus by the last day of the 12th consecutive semester in the program
- Failure to pass comprehensive examination on the first attempt
- Failure to pass the dissertation defense on the first attempt
- Failure to make satisfactory progress in the program
- Failure to maintain ethical standards of the seminary (including plagiarism)
- Separation or divorce
- Failure in any PhD course

Normally, a recommendation for termination will be initiated by the faculty supervisor. The divisional associate dean and the faculty supervisor will meet with the student for evaluation of the student's continued participation in the program and then make a recommendation to the division. The divisional associate dean will forward the division's recommendation to the PhD Director for consideration. A recommendation that the

student continue in the program should include stipulations for continuance, if any. If the recommendation is to discontinue, the PhD Director will seek input from the student to present with the recommendation to the RDOC. The RDOC will make the final decision, and the PhD Director will notify the student in writing.

#### *III.3.2.1 Automatic Termination*

Students will be automatically terminated from the PhD program due to any of the following conditions:

- Two failures of any PhD seminars or program components
- Failure to pass the comprehensive examination on a second attempt
- Failure to pass the dissertation defense on a second attempt
- Any significant ethical failure or illegal activity.

#### *III.3.3 Readmission to the PhD Program*

A student who either withdrew or otherwise ended their PhD program in good standing but would like to reapply to PhD studies must submit a new application and complete the admission process. Any new admission requirements instituted since the original enrollment must be fulfilled. At least one year must elapse between termination and readmission. An application will not be accepted from an applicant whose PhD program was terminated at the initiative of the institution for reasons stated in III.3.2.

In the interview with the faculty of the academic division of the major field of study, the applicant will be questioned concerning the circumstances of withdrawal/termination, the desire for readmission and continuation, the academic pursuits during the period of absence, and other pertinent information necessary in determining the acceptability of the student for readmission.

Depending upon the length of time since withdrawal or termination and other factors considered in the interview, the division may make one of the following recommendations:

- 1) Admission at the status achieved prior to withdrawal
- 2) Admission with the recommendation of additional seminars and/or other degree requirements.
- 3) Admission to the program without credit for previous work
- 4) Recommendation against readmission

The final decision concerning the recommendation will be determined by the Research Doctorate Admissions Committee. The PhD Director will inform the applicant of the decision.

## III.4 Changing Supervisor, Major, or Minor

### *III.4.1 Change of Faculty Supervisor*

A change of faculty supervisor may be warranted for a variety of reasons and may be initiated by either the student or the supervisor. Reasons for a change of supervisors may include any of the following:

- Another faculty member's area of specialization is better suited for the student's research interests.
- If a student changes his or her major.
- If the faculty supervisor is unresponsive to the student and not engaged with the student's progress in the program.
- If the student is unresponsive to the faculty member and does not follow the faculty member's guidance.
- If the faculty supervisor is on sabbatical.
- If the student goes on inactive status, missionary leave, or military service status.
- If the faculty supervisor is no longer employed at NOBTS.
- If there are significant conflicts between the faculty supervisor and the student.

If a change in faculty supervisor is warranted and in the best interest of the student and the supervisor, the student or faculty supervisor may send a written request to the divisional associate dean. The request must include the following items:

- 1) The name of the student and the faculty supervisor.
- 2) A rationale stating the reasons for the change.
- 3) The name of the desired new faculty supervisor for the student.

The new faculty supervisor must agree to working with the student. If the student fails to secure a new faculty supervisor, the request to change may be denied.

The divisional associate dean will contact the proposed new faculty supervisor and secure his or her acceptance of the student. The faculty supervisor and student will submit a [Supervisor Agreement Form](#) with the signatures of the student and supervisor to the PhD office. The PhD Director will inform the divisional associate dean, the student, the new faculty supervisor, and the former faculty supervisor of the change.

### *III.4.2 Change of Major*

Students desiring to change their major must first consult with their faculty supervisors. The change of major may also necessitate a change of faculty supervisors. Students may not even be considered for admission into a new major unless the student meets the prerequisites for that major.

A written request must be submitted to the divisional associate dean outlining the desired major change and the rationale. The divisional associate dean will consult with the PhD Director concerning the availability of faculty supervisors in the proposed major.

The divisional associate dean will bring the request before the division for evaluation and recommendations. The student must complete an entrance examination in the proposed major and may be required to appear before the division for an interview concerning the desired change.

The division will evaluate previous master's-level and seminar work. In addition to approving or disapproving the change of major, the division may make recommendations concerning the student's preparation for entering the major and the acceptability of previous seminar work toward the degree requirements.

The former major may function as the minor, and any seminars taken previously in the new major may be applied toward the fulfillment of the degree requirements. The division will make the final decision in this regard.

Recommendations of the division will be forwarded to the PhD Director for presentation to the RDOC, which will make the final decision. The PhD Director will inform the student of the decision.

If a new faculty supervisor is warranted, the process will follow as stated in III.4.1.

### ***III.4.3 Change of Minor***

A student desiring a change of minor should notify the PhD office in writing.

## **IV. ADDITIONAL POLICIES**

### **IV.1 Non-degree Students and Visiting Students**

#### ***IV.1.1 Non-degree Students***

Students with a master's degree from a theological institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools or a regionally accredited graduate school may apply to take up to two doctoral seminars as a non-degree student.

Qualified students may be admitted to one or two doctoral seminars provided they have met or submitted the following requirements:



- A. Submit the PhD non-degree application. Along with the online application, the student must also submit their background check, church statement, and pastor reference.
- B. Has a minimum GPA of 3.26 or higher.
- C. Submit all transcripts.
- D. Submit a sample paper.
- E. Endorsement from potential PhD supervisor or divisional associate dean.
- F. Seminar faculty approval.

The student will work with the Doctoral Admissions Counselor to gather and submit the items listed. At that point, the Doctoral Admissions Counselor will provide an admissions decision to the student for the Doctoral non-degree application. Admission into PhD seminars as a non-degree student does not guarantee acceptance into the PhD program. The student must complete the full application, with all supplemental requirements, for the next admission cycle. The student will not be considered by the Academic division or the Research Doctorate Admission Committee until they finish the full application with supplemental materials, interviews, and entrance exams. Seminars with a passing grade of B or higher will be transferred to the student's transcript following successful completion of his or her first semester in the PhD program. The transfer will not limit the student from taking the maximum allowable load during the semester of the transfer.

#### ***IV.1.2 Visiting Student***

A student who is enrolled in a doctoral program at another accredited seminary, college, or university in an area related to a PhD offered at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary may enroll in PhD seminars for credit or audit as a visiting student.

An individual desiring visiting student status must make application as a non-degree student and meet the following requirements:

- A. Provide a letter to the PhD Director stating the desire and rationale for doing seminar work at NOBTS.
- B. Provide a letter from the appropriate academic officer at the student's institution indicating approval to do seminar work at NOBTS.
- C. Meet all the prerequisites for the seminar(s)
- D. Secure a positive recommendation by the academic division of the seminar.

The visiting student must pay the applicable matriculation and student fees at the level of

PhD students.

## IV.2 Visiting Scholar

A professor employed at another accredited seminary, college, or university and has a terminal degree related to a PhD offered at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary may apply for the status of visiting scholar.

An individual desiring visiting scholar status should submit a request to the PhD Director. The PhD Director will forward a copy of the request to the associate dean of the division in which the scholar wishes to pursue study. The division will consider the request and make a recommendation to the RDOC. The PhD Director will inform the applicant of the committee's decision in writing and send copies of appropriate materials to the Registrar.

A visiting scholar may audit doctoral seminars and master's-level courses (with the permission of the professor) without the payment of fees.

A visiting scholar desiring credit for a seminar must register as a special student. The individual will be charged a matriculation fee equal to one-half of the normal semester cost for PhD students.

A visiting scholar may apply for student housing through the normal channels of the Housing Office.

## IV.3 Library Policies

All PhD students should consult the Library Circulation Policies on the library website for details and regulations concerning such policies as maintaining carrels, checking out books, renewals, utilizing computer facilities, and interlibrary loans.

### ***IV.3.1 Library Carrels***

Upon admission into the PhD program, students may request an assigned study carrel that may be retained throughout the duration of their PhD studies. These carrels are assigned on a first- come-first-served basis. At times shared carrels may be necessary due to space limitations and the number of students making requests.

## IV.4 Teaching Assistants

Faculty members may enlist a teaching assistant from among the available PhD students for assistance in grading, teaching classes in the absence of the professor, researching various subjects, and performing other academic functions.

Normally a faculty member will contact and request a student within the division and major field of study to function in this capacity. The faculty member will complete an [Employee Authorization Form](#) for the division associate dean to sign and forward to the Graduate Dean for final approval and submission to the Business Office.

Teaching assistants are paid a modest stipend monthly (four months per semester) during the period of service.

On or before the first day worked, the student will need to complete the proper paperwork for payroll procedures through the seminary Business Office.

#### IV.5 Research Doctoral Fellowship Program

The Research Doctoral Fellowship is a unique NOBTS program designed to assist outstanding students to pursue the highest level of academic preparation through the Doctor of Philosophy program. While not limited to students at the New Orleans campus, preference in awarding is given to residential students. Fellowship recipients will be recognized in seminary publications and at seminary events as well as participate in other activities around campus.

The Research Doctoral Fellowship Program provides for most or all tuition and fees for outstanding PhD students with a duration of four years. Fellowship awards can be extended upon request, review, and approval for up to but not exceeding 1 year. Recipients are expected to enroll each semester, perform at a high academic level, and remain in good standing as determined by the PhD Director.

The following fellowships are available:

J. Duncan Boyd III Memorial Fellowship in OT and  
Hebrew Lucille and Harold Harris PhD Fellowship in  
Christian Counseling Dr. Chuck Kelley PhD Fellowship  
for Evangelism Studies  
Dr. Rhonda Kelley PhD Fellowship in Women's Leadership  
Thomas S. and Mary Wheeler Messer Fellowship in New Testament and  
Greek Calhoun Fellowship for Apologetics and Philosophy  
Charles Ray Pigott Fellowship for Minority Students  
C. C. Randall Fellowship in Evangelism  
Milton & Charlotte Williams Fellowship  
The Annetta Jernigan Fellowship for Women

Interested current students should submit a [Fellowship Application](#) to [phd@nobts.edu](mailto:phd@nobts.edu) by February 1 for fellowships coming available the following fall and by Sept 1 for fellowships coming available the following spring. Interested applicants applying to begin

the PhD program in a semester in which a fellowship is available in their major should submit a [Fellowship Application](#) with their other PhD program application materials in their application portal. Consideration for a fellowship requires two academic Personal Evaluations from professors who have taught the student. Recipients can request a one-year extension by completing the [Fellowship Extension Request Form](#) with their supervisor and submitting it to the PhD Director via [phd@nobts.edu](mailto:phd@nobts.edu).

Students are notified of receipt of the fellowship prior to the start of their program of study. A public introduction of fellows is made at the annual Convocation service at the start of each academic year. Recipients also are highlighted in the NOBTS Vision magazine and other seminary publications and media.

Official inactive status for one semester granted by the Research Doctoral Oversight Committee will not be counted against the four-year timeframe of the fellowship. The student will not receive fellowship funds during the inactive semester and the student is required to pay the inactive fee. Inactive status beyond one semester will result in the loss of fellowship funds. The PhD Director and the President may choose to extend inactive status and continued receipt of fellowship funds.

## APPENDIX I: PhD Control Sheets

<b>Doctor of Philosophy (63 hours)</b>						
PhD Residency/ThM Candidacy (26 hours)						
Type of Class	Course name	Year	Term	Grade	Reqd. Credits	Earned Credits
Program Comp.	RDOC9300 Introduction to Doctoral Research and Writing				3	
Seminar					4	
Seminar					4	
Seminar					4	
Seminar***					4	
Reading Seminar 1					3	
Supervised Mentorship 1*					3	
Program Comp.	ThM Portfolio				1	
PhD Senior Residency (30 hours)						
Program Comp.	RDOC9302 Teaching Methods and Learning Theory				3	
Seminar***					4	
Seminar					4	
Seminar					4	
Seminar					4	
Reading Seminar 2					3	
Supervised Mentorship 2*					3	
Program Comp.	Proposal Approval				0	
Program Comp.	RDOC9303 Prospectus Development				3	
Program Comp.	Comprehensive Examination (Written & Oral)				1	
Program Comp.	Prospectus Approval				1	
PhD Candidacy (7 Hours)						
Program Comp.	Dissertation Research and Writing				6	
Program Comp.	Dissertation Defense				1	

\*This timing is a suggestion; students should decide when to register for these in consultation with their supervisor.

\*\*\*Two seminars must be in the student's minor field. These can be taken in either residency stage

<b>PhD: Counselor Education and Supervision (64 hours)</b>						
PhD Residency/ThM Candidacy (31 hours)						
<i>Type of Class</i>	<i>Course name</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>Req. Credit</i>	<i>Earned Credits</i>
Program Comp.	RDOC9300 Introduction to Doctoral Research and Writing				3	
Seminar					3	
Seminar					3	
Seminar					3	
Seminar					3	
Seminar					3	
Reading Seminar 1					3	
Supervised Mentorship 1*					3	
Counseling Reqr.	Clinical Practice: Doctoral Practicum and Doctoral Internship I				6	
Program Comp.	ThM Portfolio				1	
PhD Senior Residency (26 hours)						
Program Comp.	RDOC9302 Teaching Methods and Learning Theory				3	
Seminar					3	
Seminar					3	
Couns. Reqr.	Quantitative Statistics or Qualitative Methods				3	
Couns. Reqr.	Clinical Practice: Doctoral Internship 2				3	
Reading Seminar 2					3	
Supervised Mentorship 2*					3	
Program Comp.	Proposal Approval				0	
Program Comp.	RDOC9303 Prospectus Development				3	
Program Comp.	Comprehensive Examination (Written & Oral)				1	
Program Comp.	Prospectus Approval				1	
PhD Candidacy (7 Hours)						
Program Comp.	Dissertation Research and Writing				6	
Program Comp.	Dissertation Defense				1	

## APPENDIX II: Stand-Alone ThM Program Components

<b>Upper-Level Masters Courses (12 hours)</b>	4 Upper-Level Masters Courses in Specified Major (12 hours)
<b>PhD-Level Courses (14 hours)</b>	Intro to Research & Writing (3 hours) 2 PhD seminars (8 hours) Reading Seminar I (3 hours)
<b>ThM Capstone</b>	ThM Portfolio (1 hour)
<b>Total Required: 27 hours</b>	